

NIAGARA FALLS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION



PROGRAMS FOR PLAYERS 6 AND YOUNGER

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“This program sets the foundation for all future enjoyment and success our young players will have in the sport of hockey.”

“How a player gets that first taste of hockey is crucial. If the beginner has fun, developing some basic skills and building confidence, there is a good chance that player will go on to enjoy hockey for many years.” – Jayna Hefford, member of Canada’s National Women’s Team since 1997 and national spokesperson for Hockey Canada’s Initiation Program

“I believe it is important for every player to have access to the best program in the world for developing skills while having fun.”

“Learning the basic skills in practice at a young age is so important, because it allows the children to skate more, make more passes, take more shots on net and have the puck on their stick more than in any game.” – Paul Kariya, alumnus of Canada’s National Men’s Team and National Hockey League and national spokesperson for Hockey Canada’s Initiation Program

“It’s not about X’s and O’s and those types of things – it’s about development and skills and skating. You see how some of these teams in Europe, how they’ve done a remarkable job with that, and it’s something, I think, in our country we have to evaluate.”

“There’s too much focus on winning and losing at such a young age and not enough about the skill part of it and the skating part of it, because that’s truly where it starts. I’d personally like to see more skill, more creativity, because we had to play against it here and we got beat by it some nights.” – Brent Sutter, head coach of Canada’s World Junior Championship team, 2014

“It makes no sense for kids to play organized games until they have reasonable mastery of skating, puck handling, passing and shooting.” – Dr. Murray Smith, sports psychologist, Edmonton Oilers and Kelowna Rockets

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For many children who reside in Niagara Falls, participation in one of the programs coordinated and developed by the Niagara Falls Minor Hockey Association (“NFMHA”) for players six (6) and younger will be their first introduction not only to organized hockey, but to the NFMHA and its governing bodies, the Ontario Minor Hockey Association (the “OMHA”), the Ontario Hockey Federation (the “OHF”) and Hockey Canada (“HC”), as well. Any discussion of such programs should begin, therefore, by outlining the roles and responsibilities of each of these organizations and their policies, when it comes to such programs.

From the peak of the pyramid to its base:

HC

HC is the national governing body for amateur hockey in Canada. Each province is represented by at least one (1) branch of HC. HC also works in conjunction with the Canadian Hockey League and the Canadian Interuniversity Sport in growing the game at all levels.

The mission statement of HC is:

“Lead, Develop and Promote Positive Hockey Experiences.”

HC believes:

- in a positive hockey experience for all participants, in a safe, sportsmanlike environment
- in the values of fair play and sportsmanship, including the development of respect for all people by all participants
- in hockey opportunities for all people, regardless of age, gender, colour, race, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic status and in both official languages
- in the importance for participants to develop dignity and self-esteem
- to instill the values of honesty and integrity in participants at all times
- in the promotion of teamwork and the belief that what groups and society can achieve as a whole is greater than that which can be achieved by individuals
- in the country of Canada, its tradition in the game of hockey and the proud and successful representation of this tradition around the world
- in the value of hard work, determination, the pursuit of excellence and success in all activities
- in the benefits of personal and physical well-being

HC oversees the management of hockey programs in Canada, from entry level to high performance teams and competitions, including world championships and the Olympic Winter Games. HC is also Canada’s voice within the International Ice Hockey Federation. When it comes to such programs, HC has adopted a hockey-specific adaptation of Sport Canada’s long-term athlete development (“LTAD”) model.

Sport Canada's LTAD model

The LTAD model is a seven (7) stage training, competition and recovery pathway, guiding an individual's experience in sport and physical activity from infancy through all phases of adulthood. It represents a paradigm shift in the way that Canadians lead and deliver sport and physical activity in Canada. For children six (6) and younger, the LTAD model emphasizes:

- physical literacy through a variety of activities, such as running, jumping, catching, throwing, balancing, swimming, ice and snow activities and riding a bicycle or tricycle
- active play, including getting outside when possible and experiencing a range of activities and games
- developing fundamental movement skills
- encouraging different types of play

Parents and caregivers are urged to provide opportunities for children to play in safe, stimulating environments and expose them to new skills. It is important to be a positive, active role model, but also to let the child take charge, at times.

HC's hockey-specific adaptation of the LTAD model is called the long-term player development ("LTPD") model.

HC's LTPD model

The LTPD model is a nine (9) stage model, based on the physical, mental, emotional and cognitive development of children and adolescents. It is a framework to maximize a player's potential and long-term development in the sport of hockey over the course of his or her life. For children six (6) and younger, the LTPD model recognizes two (2) distinct stages:

- 0 to 4 years of age – the discovery stage – focus is on acquiring fundamental movement skills, such as running, gliding, jumping, kicking, catching and skating, that lay the foundation for more complex movements, thereby preparing children for a physically active lifestyle
- 5 to 6 years of age – the fundamentals 1 stage – focus is on the development of physical literacy, mastering fundamental movement skills and motor development through the participation in many sports and activities, including

the basic hockey skills of skating and puck control through HC's initiation program and FUN competitions in a team environment

In particular, for children five (5) to six (6) years of age, HC recognizes that the skill of skating speed can be developed quickly. Coaching should focus on developing skating speed in repetitions of less than five (5) seconds. The ABC's of agility balance and coordination should be emphasized through the teaching of skills and small games.

HC recommends that, in the fundamentals 1 stage, players spend eighty five per cent (85%) of their time on the introduction and development of technical skills, such as skating, puck control and passing. As the season progresses, individual tactics, such as 1 on 1's, and modified game play, can be introduced, but players should continue to refine their technical skills, as they will need to carry these throughout their hockey career. In fact, research has concluded that it takes a minimum of ten (10) years and ten thousand (10,000) hours of deliberate training for a talented player to reach elite skill levels.

The foundation of HC's initiation program is stations-based practices and cross-ice games, the benefits of which include:

- more puck touches
- maximum ice usage
- increased competition for all players
- fun for all players

To assist in the implementation of the program, HC has developed a series of eighty (80) suggested lesson plans, twenty (20) in each of its initiation program lesson manuals A, B, C and D, to teach beginning hockey players the basic skills in an organized and tested progression. The lesson plans include drawings, silhouettes and ice diagrams, which illustrate and explain the desired skills and drills that are covered in the manuals.

Each branch of HC and each local minor hockey association is required, under HC's policy 5.8, to adopt the initiation program curriculum.

HC's policy 5.8

HC's policy 5.8 is reproduced below:

5.8 Initiation Program

- 5.8.1 Initiation Program Implementation
 - 5.8.1.1 The name for pre-novice hockey (under the age of seven (7) years old) shall be initiation.
 - 5.8.1.2 Branches shall clearly show evidence in their constitution and by-laws that they adopt the Initiation Program curriculum in their Branch.
 - 5.8.1.3 Each local minor hockey association shall clearly show evidence in its constitution and by-laws that it adopts the Initiation Program curriculum in its association.
 - 5.8.1.4 Hockey Canada mandates that all on-ice personnel in leadership positions in the divisions of pre-novice shall successfully complete the Intro Coach Instructor Program.
 - 5.8.1.5 Hockey Canada mandates that the Skills of Gold DVD set 1-4 be included in the “Intro to Coach” clinic materials.
- 5.8.2 Initiation Program Instructors
 - 5.8.2.1 There is no prerequisite prior to attending an Intro Coach Instructor Clinic.
 - 5.8.2.2 Accreditation as an Intro Coach qualified Initiation Program Instructor will be given immediately upon successful completion of the clinic. Successful completion requires: Compulsory attendance at all modules and no pass/fail criteria.
 - 5.8.2.3 Accreditation as an Initiation Program Instructor will be given individuals sixteen (16) years old or over at the date of the clinic. The Initiation Program recognizes that younger individuals may play key roles in the delivery of the Initiation Program as on-ice assistants and demonstrators. These people are also encouraged to attend an Intro Coach Instructor Clinic.

OHF

The OHF is one of three (3) branches of HC in Ontario.

The OHF has been in existence since 1989 and has the largest area of jurisdiction over minor hockey in Ontario.

The main objects of the OHF are:

- to foster, promote and encourage the sport of amateur hockey
- to provide opportunities for all players to play the sport
- to promote the orderly development of all categories
- to coordinate and conduct competitions for branch, regional and national championships

The strategic plan of the OHF is to provide administrative resources and coordinate programs, services and events for hockey participants and the OHF's member partners.

On an annual basis, the OHF will coordinate approximately fifteen (15) branch, regional and national championship events, while rewarding dedication and hard work through a bursary program and an awards program.

The OHF provides support to various development programs for coaches, officials, trainers and players and safety and risk management issues and offers resources for harassment and abuse education.

OMHA

The OMHA is one of seven (7) member partners of the OHF.

The OMHA, founded in 1935, is the largest minor hockey association in the world and oversees a participant base of three hundred thousand (300,000), consisting of players, coaches, trainers, officials, hockey volunteers and parents across Ontario. The OMHA annually coordinates approximately thirty one (31) leagues and approximately six hundred (600) development clinics throughout Ontario.

The objects of the OMHA are:

- to encourage and promote certain ideals in all participants: to play fairly under all circumstances and all conditions; to give opponents a fair chance and not take unfair advantage of any opponent; to win graciously and accept defeat with dignity; to show respect to the game officials

- to love the game above the prize
- to provide sport for the greatest number

The mission of the OMHA is to promote, encourage, govern and organize ice hockey for the youth of the OMHA and includes:

- coordinating and developing minor hockey programs for all ages, for players in that part of Ontario for which the OMHA is responsible
- protecting and serving the mutual interests of all of its members
- carrying out competition for championships, where appropriate
- recognizing the integrity of local community programs and encouraging a strong sense of community program participation
- enhancing the positive values of programs by providing leadership and initiatives to develop players, coaches, officials and local volunteers

All minor hockey associations are required, under OMHA policy 2.3, to adopt the initiation program practice format, emphasizing skill development.

OMHA policy 2.3

The relevant sections of OMHA policy 2.3 are reproduced below:

2.3 Program Below Novice

The following Policy will be in effect for Minor Development/Local League/House League Competition:

- a) Age categories below Novice will be: Tyke – for players aged 7 and Initiation Program (IP) for players 6 and younger.
- b) All Minor Hockey Associations and Teams must adopt the Initiation Program (IP) practice format, emphasizing skill development.

- d) All coaches Novice and below must be Intro Coach (CHIP) certified and must have Speak Out or Respect in Sport Certification.
- e) All Associations must identify an Initiation Program (IP) contact person.
- f) The lightweight Blue Puck shall be mandatory for all hockey programs for players six (6) years of age and below. It is recommended for all hockey programs for players seven (7) years of age and below.

NFMHA

The NFMHA is one of approximately two hundred and fifty (250) active member minor hockey associations of the OMHA.

The NFMHA is a not-for-profit corporation incorporated as the Greater Niagara Falls Minor Hockey Association on February 28, 1969, and revived as the NFMHA on August 7, 2001.

The objects of the NFMHA are:

- to encourage and promote minor hockey in the City of Niagara Falls
- to guide the formation of hockey leagues according to age and to allot players to sponsor teams throughout the corporation limits of the City of Niagara Falls
- to inculcate certain ideals: to play fairly under all circumstances and all conditions, to give opponents a fair chance and not take unfair advantage of any opponent, to win modestly and receive defeat with a smile, to give credit to the team that wins and not to question or dispute the referee's decision
- to accept donations, gifts, legacies and bequests to cover the promotion and the carrying out of the foregoing objects only

The mission of the NFMHA is to organize, develop and promote minor ice hockey for the youth of Niagara Falls, including:

- the opportunity for all eligible individuals to participate in recreational house league hockey and to promote community-based programs, which will allow a player to participate in an environment for fun, physical exercise and fair play
- the development of and participation in representative ice hockey and provide the opportunity to participate at the highest competitive level

- to instill in all players, coaches, managers and members associated with the NFMHA good sportsmanship, correct and proper behaviour on and off the ice, respect for authority and team play

The NFMHA is managed by a volunteer board of directors, known as the “executive”, employs an office administrator, a registrar and an ice scheduler and maintains offices in the Gale Centre in Niagara Falls.

The NFMHA coordinates and develops minor hockey programs for all ages, up to and including the midget age division, in Niagara Falls.

For players six (6) (i.e. as of December 31 of the calendar year in which the season commences) and younger and the coaches, trainers and other volunteers who wish to work with and for the benefit of such players, the NFMHA coordinates and develops the following programs:

- learn to skate
- initiation program, in accordance with HC policy 5.8 and OMHA policy 2.3, which will typically be divided into two (2) divisions, IP – level one and IP – level two
- rep development, also known as the “Junior Flyers”

Learn to skate

Learn to skate is designed for players four (4) years of age (i.e. as of December 31 of the calendar year in which the season commences), with little or no previous skating experience. It is similar to the CanSkate learn to skate program developed by Skate Canada, based on Sport Canada’s LTAD model. However, learn to skate goes further, including an introduction to HC’s lesson manual A, developed specifically for hockey, based on the LTPD model.

In particular, players are required to wear a full set of properly fitting and approved hockey equipment while participating in learn to skate, including:

- athletic support and protective cup
- shin pads
- pants
- shoulder pads

- elbow pads
- CSA approved helmet
- CSA approved face mask
- gloves
- skates
- stick
- neck guard
- mouth guard
- socks (will be given to the players at the start of the season)
- jersey (will be given to the players at the start of the season)

Players will be grouped accordingly to their skating abilities, with a target player-to-instructor ratio of no more than 5:1. Practices will be full-ice, but stations-based. Skate aids and/or chairs will be available for weaker skaters.

All coaches in learn to skate will be accredited as Intro Coach (“CHIP”) or Hockey University Community Coach (“HUCC”) instructors and have Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification. There will also be several on-ice assistants and demonstrators, who will be encouraged to attend a CHIP or HUCC clinic and obtain their Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification, as well. There will be at least one (1) Hockey Trainers Certification Program (“HTCP”) accredited trainer in learn to skate, who will also be encouraged to obtain his or her Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification.

Learn to skate will focus on acquiring the fundamental movement skills associated with skating, including the ABC’s of agility, balance and coordination, in a fun and safe environment. The skating components of HC’s initiation program lesson manual A will be the guide. The goal is for players to obtain an introduction to and basic physical literacy in the following skills, among others:

- basic stance
- getting up from ice
- T-push
- gliding – two feet

- gliding – one foot
- scooting
- one o'clock, eleven o'clock stop
- striding forward
- glide turns
- moving sideways
- backward stance
- backward gliding
- C-cut
- backward stopping
- backward striding

Learn to skate will practice once a week, typically on Saturday mornings.

IP – level one

IP – level one is designed for players five (5) years of age (i.e. as of December 31 of the calendar year in which the season commences), with a moderate degree of previous skating experience. It is, specifically, not a learn to skate program. Players must, at minimum, have a basic physical literacy in the fundamental movement skills associated with skating, obtained in learn to skate or elsewhere, to participate in IP – level one.

Players are required to wear a full set of properly fitting and approved hockey equipment while participating in IP – level one. Socks and jerseys will be given to the players at the start of the season.

Players will be placed on teams of no more than fifteen (15) and grouped according to skill within such teams, with a target player-to-instructor ratio of no more than 5:1. Practices will be half-ice and stations-based, using lightweight blue pucks. No skate aids and/or chairs will be available.

All coaches in IP – level one will be accredited as CHIP or HUCC instructors and have Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification. There will also be several on-ice assistants and demonstrators,

who will be encouraged to attend a CHIP or HUCC clinic and obtain their Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification, as well. There will be at least one (1) HTCP accredited trainer on each team in IP – level one, who will also be encouraged to obtain his or her Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification.

IP – level one will focus on reviewing and refining the fundamental movement skills associated with skating, including the ABC's of agility, balance and coordination, obtained in learn to skate or elsewhere, in a fun and safe environment. HC's initiation program lesson manuals A and B will be the guide. The goal is for players to refine their skating skills, with an emphasis on speed, and obtain an introduction to and basic physical literacy in the areas of puck control and passing, including the following skills, among others:

- stationary puckhandling and stance
- puckhandling while skating
- open ice carry
- starting and stopping with the puck
- weaving with the puck
- forehand pass and receive
- backhand pass and receive
- forehand sweep shot
- backhand sweep shot
- skating and shooting
- scooting on the circles
- push and glide
- front start
- edge control
- two foot stop
- crossover pumping
- reversing directions

- backward one foot stop
- gliding backwards on one skate
- backward push and glide
- pivots
- tight turns
- control puck with feet
- puckhandling combinations
- lead pass
- bank pass to partner
- wrist shot

Cross-ice games will be introduced at or around the mid-point of the season, while maintaining a practice-to-game ratio of 3:1. Half-ice games will be introduced during the final month of the season, while maintaining the same practice-to-game ratio. IP – level one will practice twice a week, typically on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

IP – level two

IP – level two is designed for players six (6) years of age (i.e. as of December 31 of the calendar year in which the season commences), with significant previous skating experience and a moderate degree of previous puck control and passing experience. It is, specifically, not a learn to skate or even an entry level initiation program. Players must, at minimum, have refined skating skills, with an emphasis on speed, and a basic physical literacy in the areas of puck control and passing, obtained in learn to skate and IP – level one or elsewhere, to participate in IP – level two.

Players are required to wear a full set of properly fitting and approved hockey equipment while participating in IP – level two. Socks and jerseys will be given to the players at the start of the season.

Players will be placed on teams of no more than fifteen (15) and grouped according to skill within such teams, with a target player-to-instructor ratio of no more than 5:1. Practices will be

half-ice and stations-based, using lightweight blue pucks. No skate aids and/or chairs will be available.

All coaches in IP – level two will be accredited as CHIP or HUCC instructors and have Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification. There will also be several on-ice assistants and demonstrators, who will be encouraged to attend a CHIP or HUCC clinic and obtain their Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification, as well. There will be at least one (1) HTCP accredited trainer on each team in IP – level two, who will also be encouraged to obtain his or her Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification.

IP – level two will focus on reviewing and refining the technical skills of skating, puck control and passing, including the ABC's of agility, balance and coordination, obtained in learn to skate and IP – level one or elsewhere, in a fun and safe environment. HC's initiation program lesson manuals C and D will be the guide. The goal is for players to refine their skating, puck control and passing skills, with an emphasis on speed, and obtain an introduction to and basic physical literacy in the following skills, among others:

- one foot stop, front foot
- crossover start
- backward crossover start
- flip pass
- flip shot
- skating fakes
- moving to space
- pass receiving in skates
- one foot stop, outside edge
- two foot stop and crossover start
- reverse pivots
- two foot parallel back stop
- backward lateral crossovers
- backhand flip shot

Half-ice games will be introduced at or around the mid-point of the season, while maintaining a practice-to-game ratio of 3:1. Full-ice games will be introduced during the final month of the season, while maintaining the same practice-to-game ratio. IP – level two will practice twice a week, typically on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Rep development

Rep development, also known as the “Junior Flyers”, is designed for players six (6) years of age (i.e. as of December 31 of the calendar year in which the season commences), with a keen interest in hockey, significant previous skating experience and a moderate degree of previous puck control and passing experience, who wish to augment or supplement the technical skills that they are receiving in IP – level two or elsewhere. It is, specifically, not a learn to skate or even an entry level initiation program. Players must, at minimum, have refined skating skills, with an emphasis on speed, and a basic physical literacy in the areas of puck control and passing, obtained in learn to skate, IP – level one, IP – level two or elsewhere, to participate in rep development.

As its name suggests, rep development is anticipated to produce players who will be selected, based on their level two skill level, to participate in NFMHA’s representative teams, beginning at seven (7) years of age. It is also anticipated to produce coaches, trainers and other volunteers who will work with and for the benefit of such players. As such, only players, coaches, trainers and other volunteers with a keen interest in hockey, who are willing to make an above average commitment to the sport, are encouraged to participate in rep development.

Players are required to wear a full set of properly fitting and approved hockey equipment while participating in rep development. Socks and jerseys will be given to the players at the start of the season.

Players will be grouped according to their skill level, with a target player-to-instructor ratio of no more than 5:1. Practices will be full-ice and stations-based, using lightweight blue pucks. No skate aids and/or chairs will be available.

All coaches in rep development will be accredited as CHIP or HUCC instructors and have Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification. There will also be several on-ice assistants and demonstrators, who will be encouraged to attend a CHIP or HUCC clinic and obtain their Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification, as well. There will be at least one (1) HTCP accredited trainer in rep development, who will also be encouraged to obtain his or her Speak Out or Respect in Sport certification.

Rep development will focus on reviewing and refining the technical skills of skating, puck control and passing, including the ABC's of agility, balance and coordination, obtained in learn to skate, IP – level one, IP – level two or elsewhere, in a fun and safe environment. Phases 1 and 2 of HC's novice manual will be the guide. The goal is for players to obtain an advanced skill level and an introduction to and basic understanding of such things as icings, offsides, penalties and individual tactics, prior to participating in NFMHA's representative teams.

Half-ice games will be introduced at or around two (2) months into the season, while maintaining a practice-to-game ratio of 3:1. Full-ice games will be introduced during the final month of the season, while maintaining the same practice-to-game ratio. A referee, a timekeeper and an announcer will be coordinated by the NFMHA to run the full-ice games.

Rep development will practice twice a week, typically on week nights. At least one (1) interactive parent and player seminar will be coordinated by the NFMHA per season, to cover such things as practice sequencing and physical preparation and recovery. In addition, guest on-ice instructors (i.e. for power skating, edge control, passing and shooting) will be coordinated by the NFMHA to run at least one (1) practice per month. Finally, at least one (1) interactive video seminar (i.e. of the "Peter Puck" variety, to visually demonstrate such things as icings, offsides, penalties and individual tactics) will be coordinated by the NFMHA per month.

Short off-ice warm-ups, based on dynamic stretching, and cool-downs, based on static stretching, will be incorporated into each rep development practice.

Roles and responsibilities

HC recognizes that, because its initiation program is different from those typically offered by local minor hockey associations, with learning being emphasized as opposed to playing, there are bound to be some doubters and those who favour a more traditional approach. Growing pains are normal in any new program and, given that both the participants and most of the coaches, trainers and other volunteers in the initiation program are likely to be inexperienced, implementation of the program may not be as smooth as one would like. However, with commitment, patience and support, the results will come and, in most cases, exceed everyone's expectations.

Support must come from a number of sources and a variety of individuals and organizations. First, it is essential that NFMHA lend its support in the following ways:

- identifying and recruiting convenor(s), coaches, trainers and other volunteers to manage and run the program
- providing player lists, including contact information, to the convenor(s) in a timely manner
- providing training and support to the convenor(s), coaches, trainers and other volunteers, beyond the CHIP, HUCC and HTCP programs, including reproduction and delivery of the program materials to the convenor(s) in a timely manner
- liaising with the convenor(s) on a regular basis and advising them immediately of any schedule or other changes or questions or concerns
- evaluating the program and making changes, when required
- conducting regular executive meetings
- coordinating and developing ice schedules for the program and delivering them to the convenor(s) in a timely manner
- coordinating and developing special events for the program
- obtaining and distributing socks, jerseys, equipment and special supplies, such as goaltender equipment, lightweight blue pucks, pylons and skate aids, to the convenor(s) in a timely manner
- reviewing and responding to player movement requests in a timely manner
- reviewing and responding to recommendations for disciplinary action in a timely manner
- coordinating guest instructors, referees, timekeepers, announcers, seminars and video presentations for rep development

The individual(s) chosen by the NFMHA to manage the program, known as the convenor(s), must lend their support in the following ways:

- understanding the program
- identifying, recruiting and assigning coaches, trainers and other volunteers to run the program
- sorting and building teams, based on player lists, and communicating such teams to the NFMHA and the coaches in a timely manner

- providing training and support to the coaches, trainers and other volunteers, including delivery of the program materials to the coaches in a timely manner
- liaising with the NFMHA and the coaches, trainers and other volunteers on a regular basis and advising them immediately of any schedule or other changes or questions or concerns
- evaluating the program and recommending changes, when required
- conducting regular coaches' meetings
- coordinating and developing special events for the program
- delivering ice schedules for the program to the coaches in timely manner
- obtaining and distributing socks, jerseys, equipment and special supplies, such as goaltender equipment, lightweight blue pucks, pylons and skate aids, to the coaches, trainers and other volunteers in a timely manner
- identifying and submitting player movement requests to the NFMHA in a timely manner
- making sure that all practices begin and end on time, where possible, including determining whether a flood is necessary, depending on ice conditions and timing
- reporting the circumstances surrounding, and recommending the need for, any disciplinary action within the program
- ensuring that guest instructors, referees, timekeepers and announcers are on hand, when required, for rep development

The coaches chosen by the NFMHA run the program must lend their support in the following ways:

- understanding the program
- identifying and recruiting other coaches, trainers and other volunteers to assist in running the program
- obtaining and maintaining the required accreditations and certifications for themselves and encouraging other coaches, trainers and other volunteers to do the same

- tailoring their coaching philosophy to the program
- delivering a written welcome letter or e-mail to the players or their parents in a timely manner
- delivering ice schedules to the players or their parents in a timely manner
- obtaining and distributing socks, jerseys, equipment and special supplies, such as goaltender equipment, lightweight blue pucks, pylons and skate aids, to the players or their parents or the other coaches, trainers and other volunteers in a timely manner
- preparing written practice plans based on HC's initiation program lesson manuals A, B, C or D or HC's novice manual, as the case may be
- attending practices or arranging attendance by other coaches and ensuring attendance by trainers and other volunteers, including on-ice assistants and demonstrators
- arriving at the arena on time
- taking responsibility for the conduct of the players in the dressing room and on the ice
- ensuring that each player wears a full set of properly fitting and approved hockey equipment while participating in the program
- exemplifying fair play and cooperation
- providing instruction in a manner that motivates and challenges the players, while respecting them as individuals
- providing constructive and effective feedback to the convenor(s) and the players or their parents
- demonstrating risk management skills, making every effort to ensure that a safe environment is offered
- liaising with the convenor(s) and the players or their parents on a regular basis and advising them immediately of any schedule or other changes or questions or concerns
- coordinating an orderly entrance to and exit from the ice surface

- evaluating the program and recommending changes, when required
- attending coaches' meetings
- coordinating special events for the program
- identifying and submitting player movement requests to the convenor(s) in a timely manner
- reporting the circumstances surrounding, and recommending the need for, any disciplinary action within the program

The parents of the players participating in the program must lend their support in the following ways:

- completing the Respect in Sport – Parent program and honouring the Sport Parent's Commitment, including:
 - not forcing his or her child to participate
 - not living vicariously through his or her child
 - not having unrealistic expectations of his or her child
 - always finding something in his or her child's performance to praise
 - allowing his or her child to set his or her own standards of excellence
 - providing love and support for his or her child, regardless of his or her performance
 - supporting the NFMHA's, the convenor(s)', the coaches', the trainers' and the other volunteers' decisions
 - employing the twenty four (24) hour rule when communicating any questions or concerns to the coaches
 - speaking out and intervening in instances of unacceptable behaviour
 - cheering for his or her child and his or her team in positive ways
 - providing positive support and encouragement to his or her child's teammates and encouraging his or her child to do so, as well

- ensuring that his or her child arrives at the arena on time and physically prepared (see appendix “G”)
- ensuring that his or her child physically recovers after each practice (see appendix “G”)
- taking responsibility for the conduct of his or her child in the arena and the dressing room
- ensuring that his or her child wears a full set of properly fitting and approved hockey equipment while participating in the program
- submitting player movement requests to the coaches in a timely manner

Frequently asked questions

What is the initiation program?

- The initiation program is a curriculum-based program for beginning hockey players, developed by Hockey Canada, based on its long-term player development model, and now mandated for all local minor hockey associations by both Hockey Canada and the Ontario Minor Hockey Association, which govern the Niagara Falls Minor Hockey Association. The program is a tested and recommended skill development program for teaching hockey to beginning players. It is comprised of a coaching course, called Intro Coach or Hockey University Community Coach, and a set of lesson plans that provide a consistent curriculum.

Why change the instructional program that you have traditionally delivered?

- As indicated, the initiation program is now mandated for all local minor hockey associations by both Hockey Canada and the Ontario Minor Hockey Association, which govern our association. Each local minor hockey association is required to clearly show evidence, in its constitution and by-laws, that it adopts the initiation program curriculum in its association. In addition, we want to ensure that the skill development of our players keeps pace with the skill development of players from other local minor hockey associations, with whose representative teams our representative teams compete.

What are the lesson plans and how were they developed?

- The lesson plans were developed by experts from Hockey Canada, with cooperation and financial support from Sport Canada, and have been refined over many years. They provide the basis for teaching hockey in an organized and thoughtful progression of skill development, from week to week, so that players get the most out of their ice time. The use of the lesson plans also ensure that players get consistent instruction, suitable to their skill level, regardless of the team that they are on or the experience, motivation or preparation of their coach.

Can coaches deviate from the lesson plans?

- Yes, a certain amount of creativity in teaching the curriculum is desirable and even encouraged. However, the curriculum must be taught in an organized and thoughtful manner and in the progression of skill development, from week to week, that the lesson plans contemplate. All players must emerge from the program with the same technical skills, although some players' skills will be more refined than others.

Why such a high ratio of practices to games?

- Hockey Canada is of the view that one (1) individual practice will give a player more skill development than eleven (11) games collectively. It cites the following statistics, recorded during a sixty (60) minute peewee hockey game:
 - players had the puck on their stick for an average of eight (8) seconds combined
 - players got an average of eighteen (18) shifts
 - ninety nine per cent (99%) of the feedback that the coaches gave the players related to the times that they had the puck – ironically, each player only had the puck for an average of 0.2% of the game
 - players took an average of one (1) to two (2) shots on goal

Why the extensive use of cross-ice and half-ice games?

- Hockey Canada is of the view that the benefits of cross-ice and half-ice games are:
 - more puck contact, resulting in improved puck skills

- more shooting opportunities, enhancing scoring skills
- more repetitions for goalies
- smaller playing surface, resulting in increased tempo, quicker decisions and quicker reactions
- hockey sense is developed at a younger age
- more efficient use of ice time, allowing for more practices or lower costs

Can I register my child in rep development, even if I do not register him or her in IP – level one or IP – level two?

- Yes, if your child has, at minimum, refined skating skills, with an emphasis on speed, and a basic physical literacy in the areas of puck control and passing, obtained in learn to skate and either IP – level one or IP – level two or elsewhere, you can register your child in rep development, even if you do not register him or her in IP – level one or IP – level two. Rep development will practice twice a week, typically on week nights.

How much does it cost to register my child in one (1) or more of your programs?

- Registration fees vary, from season to season. Please consult our website at www.hockeyniagara.com or call the office at 905-374-2613.

When do your programs run?

- The program typically runs from the middle of September to the end of February, for learn to skate, IP – level one and IP – level two, with rep development starting in early October.

Can I choose the specific days and times that my child will practice?

- No, you will get a rotating schedule at the start of the season, indicating when your child will practice.

My child will only be three (3) years of age as of December 31 of the calendar year in which the season commences, but has some previous skating experience. Can I register him or her for learn to skate?

My child will only be four (4) years of age as of December 31 of the calendar year in which the season commences, but has a basic physical literacy in the fundamental movement skills

associated with skating, obtained in learn to skate or elsewhere. Can I register him or her for IP – level one?

My child will only be five (5) years of age as of December 31 of the calendar year in which the season commences, but has refined skating skills, with an emphasis on speed, and a basic physical literacy in the areas of puck control and passing, obtained in learn to skate and IP – level one or elsewhere, can I register him or her for IP – level two and/or rep development?

- Yes, we do make exceptions for younger children, depending on their skill level. We also make exceptions for older children, depending on their skill level (e.g. if a six (6) year old with little or no previous skating experience wished to register for learn to skate). However, we reserve the right to move your child to another program, at any time, in our absolute discretion, based on a player movement request from you, a coach or the convenor(s). Also, in the case of older children, the exception is typically one-time only, with them having to register with their own age group the following season.

Can I be a coach, trainer or other volunteer?

- Yes, please consult our website at www.hockeyniagara.com for an application or call the office at 905-374-2613.

What hockey equipment will my child need?

- Players are required to wear a full set of properly fitting and approved hockey equipment, including:
 - athletic support and protective cup
 - shin pads
 - pants
 - shoulder pads
 - elbow pads
 - CSA approved helmet
 - CSA approved face mask
 - gloves
 - skates

- stick
- neck guard
- mouth guard
- socks (will be given to the players at the start of the season)
- jersey (will be given to the players at the start of the season)

What if I have questions or concerns, before, during or after the season?

- Before and after the season, please consult our website at www.hockeyniagara.com or call the office at 905-374-2613. During the season, please communicate your question or concern to your child's coach, honouring the Sport Parent's Commitment from the Respect in Sport – Parent program and, in particular, the twenty four (24) hour rule. If the coach cannot resolve the question or concern, he or she will communicate it to the convenor(s) and so on.

Can I request that my child be assigned to the same team as his or her friend?

- Yes, and we will attempt to accommodate the request, but make no guarantees.

APPENDIX "A"

NIAGARA FALLS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION



PROGRAMS FOR PLAYERS 6 AND YOUNGER SEASON PLAN

Prepared by: Brandon Boone, initiation program contact person for 2014-2016

May

- online registration begins
- association and convenor begin recruiting coaches and trainers and assisting and encouraging them to obtain accreditations

June

- online registration continues
- association and convenor continue recruiting coaches and trainers and assisting and encouraging them to obtain accreditations

July

- online registration continues
- association and convenor continue recruiting coaches and trainers and assisting and encouraging them to obtain accreditations
- online registration ends

August

- in-person registration begins
- association and convenor continue recruiting coaches and trainers and assisting and encouraging them to obtain accreditations
- association and convenor choose head coaches for learn to skate, IP – level one and IP – level two
- association and convenor conduct introduction sessions with head coaches for learn to skate, IP – level one and IP – level two
- association, convenor and head coaches select teams for IP – level one and IP – level two
- head coaches begin recruiting assistant coaches and trainers and assisting and encouraging them to obtain accreditations

September

- in-person registration continues
- head coaches continue recruiting assistant coaches and assisting and encouraging them to obtain accreditations
- learn to skate, IP – level one and IP – level two begin
- association, convenor and head coaches consider player movement
- association and convenor choose head coach for rep development
- association and convenor conduct introduction session with head coach for rep development

- head coach of rep development begins recruiting assistant coaches and trainers and encouraging them to obtain accreditations
- in-person registration ends for learn to skate, IP – level one and IP – level two

October

- in-person registration continues for rep development
- head coaches continue recruiting assistant coaches and assisting and encouraging them to obtain accreditations
- learn to skate, IP – level one and IP – level two continue
- rep development begins
- association and convenor arrange individual and team photos
- association and convenor arrange coaches' meetings for all programs
- in-person registration ends for rep development

November

- all programs continue
- association and convenor arrange coaches' meetings for all programs

December

- all programs continue
- association and convenor arrange coaches' meetings for all programs
- Christmas party for all programs

January

- all programs continue
- association and convenor arrange coaches' meetings for all programs

February

- all programs continue
- association and convenor arrange coaches' meetings for all programs
- all programs end
- end of season party for all programs

March and April

- transition
- association appoints convenor, implements any changes and sets registration fees

APPENDIX “B”

NIAGARA FALLS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION



PROGRAMS FOR PLAYERS 6 AND YOUNGER

LESSON PLANS FOR IP - LEVEL ONE

Prepared by: Brandon Boone, initiation program contact person for 2014-2016

Focus and goal

IP – level one will focus on reviewing and refining the fundamental movement skills associated with skating, including the ABC's of agility, balance and coordination, obtained in learn to skate or elsewhere, in a fun and safe environment. Hockey Canada's initiation program lesson manuals A and B will be the guide. The goal is for players to refine their skating skills, with an emphasis on speed, and obtain an introduction to and basic physical literacy in the areas of puck control and passing.

Teaching method

A certain amount of creativity in teaching the curriculum is desirable and even encouraged. However, the curriculum must be taught in an organized and thoughtful manner and in the progression of skill development, from week to week, that the lesson plans contemplate. All players must emerge from the program with the same technical skills, although some players' skills will be more refined than others.

References such as (A-1) are to Hockey Canada's initiation program lesson manuals, which set out the key instructional points for the skills listed and provide sample drills.

Lesson plans

Lesson 1

Dressing room – introduction of coaches, parents and players, explanation of coaching philosophy, explanation of safety rules, general instructions, questions and concerns

Free skate and warm-up (A-1) – coaches evaluate players' skating ability and separate them into three (3) groups (basic, intermediate, advanced), subject to change as season progresses

Skating station 1 (A-1) – basic stance, agility

Skating station 2 (A-1) – balance, fun time

Skating station 3 (A-1) – balance and agility

Game time (A-1)

Lesson 2

Free skate and warm-up (A-2) – coaches continue to evaluate players' skating ability and refine group selections

Skating station 1 (A-2) – stance and agility, balance

Skating station 2 (A-2) – T-push, gliding - two feet

Skating station 3 (A-2) – fun time, gliding – one foot

Game time (A-2)

Lesson 3

Free skate and warm-up (A-3)

Skating station 1 (A-3) – gliding - two feet, T-push

Skating station 2 (A-3) – scooting, glide turns

Skating station 3 (A-3) – fun time, one o'clock or eleven o'clock stop – parts 1 and 2

Game time (A-3)

Lesson 4

Free skate and warm-up (A-4)

Skating station 1 (A-4) – stopping, striding forward skating

Skating station 2 (A-4) – glide turns, fun time

Skating station 3 (A-4) – station activities, moving sideways

Game time (A-4)

Lesson 5

Free skate and warm-up (A-5)

Skating station 1 (A-5) – moving sideways, backward stance

Skating station 2 (A-5) - backward walking, backward gliding

Skating station 3 (A-5) – fun time, balance and agility

Game time (A-5)

Lesson 6

Free skate and warm-up (A-6)

Skating station 1 (A-6) – backward stance - walking and gliding, c-cut

Skating station 2 - backward stopping, fun time

Skating station 3 – backward stopping

Game time (A-6)

Lesson 7

Free skate and warm-up (A-7)

Skating station 1 (A-7) – sideways movement, backward starting and stopping, forward skating and stopping

Skating station 2 (A-7) – backward striding, fun time

Skating station 3 (A-7) – T-push

Game and skate (A-7)

Lesson 8

Free skate and balance and agility (A-8)

Skating station (A-8) – backward skating and stopping, forward skating and stopping

Puck control and stickhandling station 1 (A-8) – stationary puckhandling and stance

Puck control and stickhandling station 2 (A-8) – puckhandling while skating, fun time

Game (A-8)

Lesson 9

Free skate and balance and agility (A-9)

Puck control and stickhandling station 1 (A-9) – puckhandling, open ice carry

Skating station (A-9) – fun time

Puck control and stickhandling station 2 (A-9) – starting with the puck

Game (A-9)

Lesson 10

Free skate and warm-up (A-10)

Skating station (A-10) – balance and agility, fun time
Puck control and stickhandling station 1 (A-10) – puckhandling
Puck control and stickhandling station 2 (A-10) – weaving with the puck
Game (A-10)

Lesson 11

Warm-up (A-11)
Skating station 1 (A-11) – balance and agility
Skating station 2 (A-11) - backward and forward skating skills, fun time
Puck control and stickhandling station (A-11) – puckhandling
Game (A-11)

Lesson 12

Warm-up (A-12)
Skating station (A-12) – balance and agility, fun time
Puck control and stickhandling station (A-12) – puckhandling
Passing and shooting station (A-12) – forehand pass and receive
Game (A-12)

Lesson 13

Warm-up (A-13)
Skating station (A-13) – balance and agility
Puck control and stickhandling station (A-13) – fun time
Passing and shooting station (A-13) – forehand pass and receive, backhand pass and receive
Fun time and game time (A-13)

Lesson 14

Warm-up (A-14)

Skating station (A-14) – balance and agility

Puck control and stickhandling station (A-15) – puckhandling

Passing and shooting station (A-14) – forehand and backhand passing and receiving, skating and passing, forehand sweep shot

Game (A-14)

Lesson 15

Warm-up (A-15)

Skating station (A-15) – balance and agility without pucks

Puck control and stickhandling station (A-15) – balance and agility with pucks

Passing and shooting station (A-14, A-15) – skate-pass, forehand and backhand passing and receiving, forehand and backhand sweep shot, skating and shooting

Game (A-15)

Lesson 16

Free skate and balance and agility (B-1)

Skating station 1 (B-1) – stance, balance and agility, fun time

Skating station 2 (B-1) – gliding on two skates, gliding on one skate

Skating station 3 (B-1) – scooting across ice, scooting on the circles

Game time (B-1)

Lesson 17

Free skate and balance and agility (B-2)

Skating station 1 (B-2) – scooting on the circles, stopping – one o'clock, eleven o'clock

Skating station 2 (B-2) – glide turns – two feet, fun time, glide turn – two skates

Skating station 3 (B-3) – sideways movement, push and glide

Game time (B-2)

Lesson 18

Free skate and balance and agility (B-3)

Skating station 1 (B-3) – push and glide stopping, front start

Skating station 2 (B-3) – fun time, lateral movement

Skating station 3 (B-3) – edge control

Game time (B-3)

Lesson 19

Free skate and balance and agility (B-4)

Skating station 1 (B-4) – sideways movement, push and glide, scooting on the circles

Skating station 2 (B-4) – fun time, glide turns, edge control

Puck control and stickhandling station (B-4) – puckhandling stance, stationary puckhandling

Game time (B-4)

Lesson 20

Free skate and balance and agility (B-5)

Skating station 1 (B-5) – edge control, two foot stop

Puck control and stickhandling station (B-5) – puckhandling stance and stationary puckhandling, skating with puck

Skating station 2 (B-5) – fun time, crossover pumping

Game time (B-5)

Lesson 21

Free skate and balance and agility (B-6)

Skating station 1 (B-6) – crossover pumping, reversing directions – two foot stop to T-push

Puck control and stickhandling station (B-6) – skating with puck

Skating station 2 (B-6) – backward stance, backward gliding, c-cut, backward v-stop

Game time (B-6)

Lesson 22

Free skate and balance and agility (B-7)

Skating station 1 (B-7) – backward c-cut, backward v-stop, backward one foot stop and forward T-push

Skating station 2 (B-7) – fun time, changing direction

Skating station 3 (B-7) – gliding backwards and one skate, backward push and glide

Game time (B-6)

Lesson 23

Free skate and balance and agility (B-8)

Skating station 1 (B-8) – backward one foot stop and forward T-push, backward gliding on one foot

Skating station 2 (B-8) – fun time

Skating station 3 (B-8) – pivot backwards to forward, pivot forward to backwards

Game time (B-8)

Lesson 24

Free skate and balance and agility (B-9)

Skating station 1 (B-9) – continue balance and agility

Skating station 2 (B-9) – fun time

Skating station 3 (B-9) – tight turn

Game time (B-9)

Lesson 25

Free skate and balance and agility (B-10)

Skating station (B-10) – tight turns, fun time

Puck control and stickhandling station 1 (B-10) – open ice carry, starting with puck

Puck control and stickhandling station 2 (B-10) – weaving with puck

Game time (B-10)

Lesson 26

Free skate and balance and agility (B-11)

Skating (B-11) – fun time

Puck control and stickhandling (B-11) – control puck with feet and puckhandling combinations

Cross-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 27

Free skate and balance and agility (B-12)

Skating station (B-12) – continue balance and agility (numbers 1, 2 and 3)

Puck control and stickhandling station (B-12) – weaving with puck, stopping with puck

Passing and shooting station (B-12) – stationary passing and receiving

Game time (B-12)

Lesson 28

Free skate and balance and agility (B-13)

Skating (B-13) – continue balance and agility

Passing and shooting (B-13) – stationary passing, skating and passing

Cross-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 29

Free skate and balance and agility (B-14)

Skating station (B-14) – fun time

Puck control and stickhandling station (A-9) – open ice carry

Passing and shooting station (B-13, B-14) – lead pass, bank pass to partner

Game time (B-14)

Lesson 30

Free skate and balance and agility (B-15)

Passing and shooting (B-14, B-15) – forehand sweep shot, backhand sweep shot, wrist shot
Cross-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 31

Free skate and balance and agility – coach’s choice, emphasize speed
Skating station 1 (A-1) – basic stance, falling and getting up
Skating station 2 (A-2, A-3) – T-push and scooting
Passing and shooting station (A-14) – forehand sweep shot
Game time – coach’s choice

Lesson 32

Free skate and balance and agility – coach’s choice, emphasize speed
Skating (A-1, A-3, A-4) – gliding on one skate and two skates, striding forward, one o’clock and eleven o’clock stop
Cross-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 33

Free skate and balance and agility – coach’s choice, emphasize speed
Skating station (A-5, A-6, A-7) – backward skating, c-cut, striding and stop
Puck control and stickhandling station (A-8, A-9, A-15) – stationary puckhandling, open ice carry, skating with the puck
Passing and shooting station (A-12, A-15) – forehand sweep pass and receiving, backhand shot
Game time - coach’s choice

Lesson 34

Free skate and balance and agility – coach’s choice, emphasize speed
Skating (A-4) – sideways movement
Puck control and stickhandling (A-10) – weaving with the puck
Passing and shooting (A-13) – backhand sweep pass and receiving

Cross-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 35

Free skate and balance and agility - coach's choice, emphasize speed

Skating station (B-2, B-3, B-5) – forward striding, edge control, two foot stop

Puck control and stickhandling station (B-11) – puck control, use of feet and combinations

Passing and shooting station (A-14, A-15) – skating and passing, skating and shooting

Game time – coach's choice

Lesson 36

Free skate and balance and agility – coach's choice, emphasize speed

Skating (B-7, B-9) – backward striding, tight turns

Passing and shooting (B-15) – wrist shot

Cross-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 37

Free skate and balance and agility - coach's choice, emphasize speed

Skating station (B-5, B-7, B-8) – crossover pumping, backward skating – gliding on one skate, pivots

Puck control and stickhandling station (B-10) – weaving with the puck

Passing and shooting station (B-13) – lead pass, bank pass

Game time - coach's choice

Lesson 38

Free skate and balance and agility – coach's choice, emphasize speed

Skating (B-1, B-6, B-7) – scooting, reverse direction

Passing and shooting (B-13) – skating and passing

Half-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 39

Free skate and balance and agility - coach's choice, emphasize speed

Skating station – coach's choice, emphasize speed

Puck control and stickhandling station (B-5, B-10, B-12) – open ice carry, starting and stopping with the puck

Passing and shooting station (B-12, B-15) – stationary passing and receiving, skating and shooting

Game time - coach's choice

Lesson 40

Free skate and balance and agility – coach's choice, emphasize speed

Fun time – coach's choice

Half-ice games with opposing team

Dressing room – season wrap-up, congratulations and thanks, questions and concerns

APPENDIX "C"

NIAGARA FALLS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION



PROGRAMS FOR PLAYERS 6 AND YOUNGER

LESSON PLANS FOR IP - LEVEL TWO

Prepared by: Brandon Boone, initiation program contact person for 2014-2016

Focus and goal

IP – level two will focus on reviewing and refining the technical skills of skating, puck control and passing, including the ABC's of agility, balance and coordination, obtained in learn to skate and IP – level one or elsewhere, in a fun and safe environment. Hockey Canada's initiation program lesson manuals C and D will be the guide. The goal is for players to refine their skating, puck control and passing skills, with an emphasis on speed.

Teaching method

A certain amount of creativity in teaching the curriculum is desirable and even encouraged. However, the curriculum must be taught in an organized and thoughtful manner and in the progression of skill development, from week to week, that the lesson plans contemplate. All players must emerge from the program with the same technical skills, although some players' skills will be more refined than others.

References such as (C-1) are to Hockey Canada's initiation program lesson manuals, which set out the key instructional points for the skills listed and provide sample drills.

Lesson plans

Lesson 1

Dressing room – introduction of coaches, parents and players, explanation of coaching philosophy, explanation of safety rules, general instructions, questions and concerns

Free skate and balance and agility (C-1) – coaches evaluate players' skating ability and separate them into three (3) groups (basic, intermediate, advanced), subject to change as season progresses

Skating station 1 (C-1) – stance, gliding on two skates, gliding on one skate

Skating station 2 (C-1) – fun time, T-push

Skating station 3 (C-1) – edge control

Game time (C-1)

Lesson 2

Free skate and balance and agility (C-2) – coaches continue to evaluate players' skating ability and refine group selections

Skating station 1 (C-2) – edge control, push and glide

Skating station 2 (C-2) - two foot stop

Skating station 3 (C-2) - scooting, scooting the circles

Game time (C-2)

Lesson 3

Free skate and balance and agility (C-3)

Skating station 1 (C-3) – edge control, push and glide

Skating station 2 (C-3) - two foot stop, front start

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-3) – puckhandling stance, stationary puckhandling

Game time (C-3)

Lesson 4

Free skate and balance and agility (C-4)

Skating station 1 (C-4) – front start – also involves push and glide and two foot stop, fun time

Skating station 2 (C-4) – backward stance, backward gliding – two skates, backward gliding – one skate

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-4) – stationary puckhandling, use of feet in puckhandling

Game time (C-4)

Lesson 5

Free skate and balance and agility (C-5)

Skating station 1 (C-5) – backward gliding – one and two feet, backward c-cuts, backward v-stop

Skating station 2 (C-5) - glide turn, crossovers

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-5) – use of feet in puckhandling

Game time (C-5)

Lesson 6

Free skate and balance and agility (C-6)

Skating station 1 (C-6) – backward c-cuts, backward v-stops, backward push and glide

Skating station 2 (C-6) – crossovers, tight turns

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-6) – skating with the puck, weaving with the puck

Game time (C-6)

Lesson 7

Free skate and balance and agility (C-7)

Skating station (C-7) – backward push and glide, tight turns, backward one foot stop and T-push

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-7) – skating with the puck, weaving with the puck, open ice carry

Passing and shooting station (C-7) – forehand sweep shot

Cool down (C-7)

Game time – coach's choice

Lesson 8

Free skate and balance and agility (C-8)

Skating station (C-8) – reversing direction – two foot stop and T-push

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-8) – open ice carry, stopping with the puck

Passing and shooting station (C-8) – forehand sweep shot, backhand sweep shot

Game time (C-8)

Lesson 9

Free skate and balance and agility (C-9)

Skating station (C-9) – one foot stop – front foot, two foot stop and T-push, pivot forward to backward

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-9) – balance and agility (station 3)

Passing and shooting station (C-9) – backhand sweep shot, stationary passing and receiving using forehand

Game time (C-9)

Lesson 10

Free skate and balance and agility (C-10)

Skating station (C-10) – pivot backwards to forward, one foot stop – front foot, pivot forward to backwards

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-10) – balance and agility (stations 1 and 3)

Passing and shooting station (C-10) – backhand sweep pass and receive – stationary, forehand sweep pass and receive

Game time (C-10)

Lesson 11

Free skate and balance and agility (C-11)

Skating station (C-11) – crossover start, lateral crossovers, pivot backwards to forward

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-11) – balance and agility (stations 1 and 4)

Passing and shooting station (C-11) – lead pass to moving target, stationary passing

Game time – coach's choice

Lesson 12

Free skate and balance and agility (C-12)

Skating station (C-12) – backward crossover start

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-12) – balance and agility (station 6)

Passing and shooting station (C-12) - bank pass, skating and passing, lead pass

Game time (C-12)

Lesson 13

Free skate and balance and agility (C-13)

Skating station (C-13) – pivot forward to backwards, pivot backwards to forward, backward crossover start

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-13) – balance and agility (stations 1 and 3)

Passing and shooting station (C-13) – flip pass, skate and shoot, bank pass, skate-pass-shoot

Game time – coach’s choice

Lesson 14

Free skate (C-14)

Skating station (C-14) – skating fakes, crossover start – forward and backward pivots

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-14) – puckhandling

Passing and shooting station (C-14) – flip shot, skate and pass, pass-skate-shoot, flip pass

Game time (C-14)

Lesson 15

Free skate and balance and agility (C-15)

Skating station (C-15) – skating fakes

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-15) - balance and agility (numbers 1 to 4)

Passing and shooting station (C-15) – flip shot, passing-skating, pass-skate-shoot

Game time (C-15)

Lesson 16

Free skate and balance and agility (D-1)

Skating station 1 (D-1) – basic stance, front v-start

Skating station 2 (D-1) - gliding on one skate

Skating station 3 (D-1) - puckhandling stance, stationary puckhandling

Game time (D-1)

Lesson 17

Free skate and balance and agility (D-2)

Skating station 1 (D-2) – push and glide, two foot stop, front v-start

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-2) – stationary puckhandling

Passing and shooting station (D-2) – stationary pass and receive – forehand and backhand

Game time (D-2)

Lesson 18

Free skate and balance and agility (D-3)

Skating station 1 (D-3) – edge control, tight turns, front start and two foot stop, push and glide

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-3) – use of feet in puckhandling

Passing and shooting station (D-3) – stationary pass and receive – forehand and backhand

Game (D-3)

Lesson 19

Free skate and balance and agility (D-4)

Skating station 1 (D-4) – edge control, tight turns

Skating station 2 (D-4) - backward stance, backward c-cuts, crossover turns

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-4) – skating with the puck

Game (D-4)

Lesson 20

Free skate and balance and agility (D-5)

Skating station (D-5) – crossovers and tight turns, backward c-cuts, backward v-stop

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-5) – skating with puck – forward and backwards, stopping with the puck

Passing and shooting station (D-5) – skating and passing

Game time (D-5)

Lesson 21

Free skate and balance and agility (D-6)

Skating station 1 (D-6) – backward v-stop, backward one foot stop

Skating station 2 (D-6) - pivot – forward to backwards, pivot - backwards to forward

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-6) – weaving with the puck

Game time (D-6)

Lesson 22

Free skate and balance and agility (D-7)

Skating station (D-7) – front v-start and tight turn, pivots – forward to backwards and backwards to forward, backward push and glide

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-7) – open ice carry, weaving with the puck

Passing and shooting station (D-7) – moving to space

Game time - coach's choice

Lesson 23

Free skate and balance and agility (D-8)

Skating station (D-8) – backward push and glide, forward crossover start

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-8) – open ice carry

Passing and shooting station (D-8) – moving to space, stationary shooting – forehand sweep, backhand sweep

Game time (D-8)

Lesson 24

Free skate and balance and agility (D-9)

Skating station (D-9) – front foot stop (inside edge) and crossover front start, lateral movement

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-9) – backwards push and glide puckhandling

Passing and shooting station (D-9) – stationary shooting – forehand and backhand, pair passing

Game time - coach's choice

Lesson 25

Free skate and balance and agility (D-10)

Skating station (D-10) – lateral movement, backward crossover start

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-10) – balance and agility (numbers 3 and 4)
Passing and shooting station (D-10) – pair passing, bank pass, skate and shoot
Game time (D-10)

Lesson 26

Free skate and balance and agility (D-11)
Skating (D-11) – backward crossover start, one foot stop (outside edge)
Passing and shooting (D-11) – bank pass-skate-shoot
Half-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 27

Free skate and balance and agility (D-12)
Skating station (D-12) – two foot stop and crossover start
Puck control and stickhandling station (D-12) – faking
Passing and shooting station (D-11) – pass receiving in skates, stationary wrist shot
Game (D-12)

Lesson 28

Free skate and balance and agility (D-13)
Passing and shooting (D-12) – continue stationary wrist shot, pass receiving in skates, flip pass
Half-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 29

Free skate and balance and agility (D-14)
Skating station (D-13) – reverse pivots, two foot parallel back stop
Puck control and stickhandling station (D-13) – faking
Passing and shooting station (D-13) – flip shot, movement to space
Game time (D-13)

Lesson 30

Free skate and balance and agility (D-15)

Skating (D-14) – backward lateral crossovers

Passing and shooting (D-14) – pass-skate-shoot, pass-movement to space

Half-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 31

Free skate and balance and agility - coach's choice, emphasize speed

Skating station (D-15) – balance and agility

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-15) – balance and agility (number 4)

Passing and shooting station (D-14) – pass-receive-shoot, backhand flip shot, flip shot, pass-receive while skating

Game (D-14)

Lesson 32

Free skate and balance and agility – coach's choice, emphasize speed

Passing and shooting (D-15) – skate-pass receive-shoot

Half-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 33

Free skate and balance and agility – coach's choice, emphasize speed

Skating station (C-2, C-3) – front two foot stop, front start

Puck control and stickhandling station (C-7) – open ice carry

Passing and shooting station (C-7, C-8) – sweep shots – forehand and backhand

Game time - coach's choice

Lesson 34

Free skate and balance and agility – coach's choice, emphasize speed

Skating (C-2, C-11) – forward striding thrust and glide, forward crossover start
Puck control and stickhandling station (C-6) – weaving with puck
Half-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 35

Free skate and balance and agility - coach's choice, emphasize speed
Skating station (C-2, C-11) – forward crossover start, forward striding thrust and glide
Puck control and stickhandling station (C-6) – continue weaving with puck
Passing and shooting station (C-9, C-10, C-13) – passing-receiving – forehand and backhand, skating and shooting
Game time – coach's choice

Lesson 36

Free skate and balance and agility – coach's choice, emphasize speed
Skating (C-5, C-6) – backward c-cuts, backward striding thrust and glide, tight turns
Half-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 37

Free skate and balance and agility - coach's choice, emphasize speed
Skating station 1 (C-7, C-12) – backward one foot stop and T-push, backward crossover start
Skating station 2 (C-9, C-14) – pivot forward to backwards, skating fakes
Passing and shooting station (C-14) – passing to a moving target
Game time - coach's choice

Lesson 38

Free skate and balance and agility – coach's choice, emphasize speed
Skating (C-5, C-10) – backward v-stop, crossovers, pivot backwards to forward
Full-ice games with opposing team

Lesson 39

Free skate and balance and agility - coach's choice, emphasize speed

Skating station (D-1, D-4, D-5, D-8) – front start – v-start and crossover, backward – c-cut, v-stop

Puck control and stickhandling station (D-3) – tight turns with pucks

Passing and shooting station (D-2, D-8) – pass-receive – forehand and backhand, sweep shot

Game time - coach's choice

Lesson 40

Free skate and balance and agility – coach's choice, emphasize speed

Skating (D-4, D-9, D-11) – crossover turns, one foot stop – front foot and back foot

Puck control and stickhandling (D-6) – weaving with puck

Full-ice games with opposing team

Dressing room – season wrap-up, congratulations and thanks, questions and concerns

APPENDIX "D"

NIAGARA FALLS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION



PROGRAMS FOR PLAYERS 6 AND YOUNGER LESSON PLANS FOR REP DEVELOPMENT

Prepared by: Brandon Boone, initiation program contact person for 2014-2016

Focus and goal

Rep development will focus on reviewing and refining the technical skills of skating, puck control and passing, including the ABC's of agility, balance and coordination, obtained in learn to skate, IP – level one, IP – level two or elsewhere, in a fun and safe environment. Phases 1 and 2 of Hockey Canada's novice manual will be the guide. The goal is for players to obtain an advanced skill level and an introduction to and basic understanding of such things as icings, offsides, penalties and individual tactics, prior to participating in NFMHA's representative teams.

Teaching method

A certain amount of creativity in teaching the curriculum is desirable and even encouraged. However, the curriculum must be taught in an organized and thoughtful manner and in the progression of skill development, from week to week, that the lesson plans contemplate. All players must emerge from the program with the same technical skills, although some players' skills will be more refined than others.

References such as (phase 1, lesson 1, skill station 1) are to Hockey Canada's novice manual, which sets out the key instructional points for the skills listed and provide sample drills.

Lesson plans

Off-ice parent and player seminar (during the week prior to lesson one)

Introduction of seminar leader, coaches, parents and players

Coaches explain coaching philosophy and safety rules and give general instructions for practices (e.g. general format, what whistles mean, etc.)

Questions or concerns for coaches

Practice sequencing (see appendix "F")

Physical preparation (see appendix "F")

Warm-up (see appendix "F")

Cool-down (see appendix "F")

Physical recovery (see appendix "F")

Questions or concerns for seminar leader or coaches

Lesson 1

Dressing room – repeat safety rules, general instructions, questions and concerns

Balance and skating, chaos (phase 1, lesson 1, skill station 1) – coaches evaluate players' skating ability and separate them into three (3) groups (basic, intermediate, advanced), subject to change as season progresses

Skating station (phase 1, lesson 1, skill station 1) – balance and skating and figure 8's inside edge

Puck control and stickhandling station (phase 1, lesson 1, skill stations 1 and 2) – chaos, stationary stickhandling, open ice carry

Passing and shooting station (phase 1, lesson 1, skill station 2) - shootout

Fun game (phase 1, lesson 1)

Lesson 2

Warm-up (phase 1, lesson 2) - coaches continue to evaluate players' skating ability and refine group selections

Skating station 1 (phase 1, lesson 2, skill station 1) – glide on one skate, front v-start

Skill station 2 (phase 1, lesson 2, skill station 2) - c-cuts around circle – inside foot, lateral crossovers – over stick

Puck control and stickhandling/passing and shooting station (phase 1, lesson 2, skill stations 1 and 2) – chaos (encourage players to try different stickhandling moves), stationary pairs passing

Fun game (phase 1, lesson 2)

Lesson 3

Repeat lesson 1 above

Lesson 4

Repeat lesson 2 above

Lesson 5

Warm-up (phase 1, lesson 3)

Puck control and stickhandling station (phase 1, lesson 3, skill stations 1 and 2) – open ice carry, rabbit/coyote

Passing and shooting station 1 (phase 1, lesson 3, skill stations 1 and 2) – stationary passing, pairs passing

Passing and shooting station 2 (phase 1, lesson 3, skill station 2) – asteroids

Fun game (phase 1, lesson 3)

Lesson 6

Warm-up (phase 1, lesson 4)

Skating station 1 (phase 1, lesson 4, skill station 1) – weave without pucks, push and glide

Skating station 2 (phase 1, lesson 4, skill station 1) – forward crossovers

Skating station 3 (phase 1, lesson 4, skill station 2) – front v-start, two foot stop

Fun game (phase 1, lesson 4)

Lesson 7

Repeat lesson 5 above

Lesson 8

Guest on-ice instructor

Video presentation 1 (off-ice, after lesson 8)

Interactive video seminar

Lesson 9

Repeat lesson 6 above

Lesson 10

Warm-up (phase 1, lesson 5)

Skating station (phase 1, lesson 5, skill station 1) – tight turns/edge control, backwards c-cuts

Puck control and stickhandling station (phase 1, lesson 5, skill station 2) – open ice carry, Fort Knox

Passing and shooting station (phase 1, lesson 5, skill station 1) – stationary passing

Fun game (phase 1, lesson 5)

Lesson 11

Warm-up (phase 1, lesson 6)

Skating station (phase 1, lesson 6, skill station 1) – crossovers, backwards c-cuts/backwards stopping

Puck control and stickhandling station (phase 1, lesson 6, skill stations 1 and 2) – tight turns with pucks, British Bulldog with pucks

Passing and shooting station (phase 1, lesson 6, skill station 2) – pairs passing, skill drill

Fun game (phase 1, lesson 6)

Lesson 12

Repeat lesson 10 above

Lesson 13

Repeat lesson 11 above

Lesson 14

Warm-up (phase 1, lesson 7)

Skating station 1 (phase 1, lesson 7, skill stations 1 and 2) – front v-start, forward/backwards pivots

Skating station 2 (phase 1, lesson 7, skill station 2) – skating, c-cuts – crossunders

Puck control and stickhandling station (phase 1, lesson 7, skill station 1) – stick handling, skating with puck

Fun game (phase 1, lesson 7)

Lesson 15

Warm-up (phase 1, lesson 8)

Skating station 1 (phase 1, lesson 8, skill station 1) – tight turns acceleration, lateral crossovers

Skating station 2 (phase 1, lesson 8, skill stations 1 and 2) – agility course, pivots

Puck control and stickhandling/passing and shooting station (phase 1, lesson 8, skill station 2) – 5 player passing, skating with puck

Fun game (phase 1, lesson 8)

Lesson 16

Guest on-ice instructor

Video presentation 2 (off-ice, after lesson 16)

Interactive video seminar

Lesson 17

Repeat warm-up and one station per group from lesson 14 above

Half-ice games

Lesson 18

Repeat lesson 15 above

Lesson 19

Warm-up (phase 2, lesson 9)

Skating station (phase 2, lesson 9, skill station 1) – backwards striding

Puck control and stickhandling station (phase 2, lesson 9, skill station 2) – stopping with the puck, rabbit/coyote, body and head fakes

Passing and shooting station (phase 2, lesson 9, skill station 1) – moving to space, stationary shooting

Fun game (phase 2, lesson 9)

Lesson 20

Repeat warm-up and one station per group from lesson 19 above

Half-ice games

Lesson 21

Warm-up (phase 2, lesson 10)

Skating station (phase 2, lesson 10, skill stations 1 and 2) – agility skate, backwards striding

Puck control and stickhandling station (phase 2, lesson 10, skill station 1) – rabbit/coyote

Passing and shooting station (phase 2, lesson 10, skill stations 1 and 2) – short pass - long pass, pairs passing, stationary shooting

Fun game (phase 2, lesson 10)

Lesson 22

Repeat warm-up and one station per group from lesson 20 above

Half-ice games

Lesson 23

Warm-up (phase 2, lesson 11)

Skating station (phase 2, lesson 11, skill station 1) – backwards cross-over start – agility movement

Passing and shooting station 1 (phase 2, lesson 11, skill stations 1 and 2) – pairs passing – pass and follow, bank pass, pairs passing

Passing and shooting station 2 (phase 2, lesson 11, skill stations 1 and 2) – shooting, shootout

Fun game (phase 2, lesson 11)

Lesson 24

Guest on-ice instructor

Video presentation 3 (off-ice, after lesson 24)

Interactive video seminar

Lesson 25

Repeat warm-up and one station per group from lesson 23 above

Half-ice games

Lesson 26

Warm-up (phase 2, lesson 12)

Skating station (phase 2, lesson 12, skill station 1)

Passing and shooting station 1 (phase 2, lesson 12, skill station 1) – pairs passing, short pass – long pass

Passing and shooting station 2 (phase 2, lesson 12, skill station 2) – pass and move, stationary passing, stationary shooting

Fun game (phase 2, lesson 12)

Lesson 27

Repeat warm-up and one station per group from less 26 above

Half-ice games

Lesson 28

Warm-up (phase 2, lesson 13)

Skating/puck control and stickhandling station (phase 2, lesson 13, skill stations 1 and 2) – tight turn puck control, 2 foot stop/crossover start

Passing and shooting station 1 (phase 2, lesson 13, skill stations 1 and 2) – telescoping passing, flip pass

Passing and shooting station 2 (phase 2, lesson 13, skill stations 1 and 2) – relay race, pass and shoot

Fun game (phase 2, lesson 13)

Lesson 29

Repeat warm-up and one station per group from lesson 28 above

Full-ice game with referee, announcer and timekeeper

Lesson 30

Warm-up (phase 2, lesson 14)

Skating station (phase 2, lesson 14, skill station 2) – backwards stopping, pivots

Puck control and stickhandling station (phase 2, lesson 14, skill stations 1 and 2) – faking, chaos

Passing and shooting station (phase 2, lesson 14, skill station 1) – pass and shoot, flip pass and move

Fun game (phase 2, lesson 14)

Lesson 31

Repeat warm-up and one station per group from lesson 30 above

Full-ice game with referee, announcer and timekeeper

Lesson 32

Guest on-ice instructor

Video presentation 4 (off-ice, after lesson 32)

Interactive video seminar

Lesson 33

Repeat warm-up and one station per group from lesson 30 above

Full-ice game with referee, announcer and timekeeper

Lesson 34

Warm-up (phase 2, lesson 15)

Skating/puck control and stickhandling station (phase 2, lesson 15, skill station 2) – chaos, backwards lateral crossovers

Passing and shooting station 1 (phase 2, lesson 15, skill station 1) – pass and move, pass and follow

Passing and shooting station 2 (phase 2, lesson 15, skill stations 1 and 2) – relay race, shooting while moving

Fun game (phase 2, lesson 15)

Lesson 35

Repeat warm-up and one station per group from lesson 34 above

Full-ice game with referee, announcer and timekeeper

Lesson 36

Warm-up (phase 2, lesson 16)

Skating station (phase 2, lesson 16, skill station 1)

Puck control station (phase 2, lesson 16, skill station 2) – chaos

Passing and shooting station (phase 2, lesson 16, skill stations 1 and 2) – bank pass, pass and move

Fun game (phase 2, lesson 16)

Dressing room – season wrap-up, congratulations and thanks, questions and concerns

APPENDIX “E”

NIAGARA FALLS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION



PROGRAMS FOR PLAYERS 6 AND YOUNGER SAMPLE COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Prepared by: Brandon Boone, initiation program contact person for 2014-2016

COACHING EXPECTATIONS & PHILOSOPHY – INITIATION PROGRAM

1. I will be firm, but fair, at all times and in all things. I will work at least as hard, as a coach, as I expect the players to work, as players.

2. I will treat everyone with courtesy and respect and expect the same in return. No coach, player or parent will be permitted to use offensive gestures or language or physically or verbally abuse any other coach, player or parent or any arena staff member, official or volunteer. This goes for parents physically or verbally abusing their own children, as well.

3. Hockey Canada estimates that one (1) efficient practice will give a player more skill development than eleven (11) games collectively. As such, I will expect regular attendance and full effort at practices and ensure that they are well-planned. Despite this, I will devote a portion of each practice to fun, unstructured play.

4. I will strive for equal attention, ice time and instruction for all players.

5. I will expect team play.

APPENDIX “F”

NIAGARA FALLS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION



PROGRAMS FOR PLAYERS 6 AND YOUNGER

SAMPLE WELCOME LETTER OR E-MAIL

Prepared by: Brandon Boone, initiation program contact person for 2014-2016

(Coach's name, street address, e-mail address and telephone number)

(Date)

I would like to welcome all parents and players to the Niagara Falls Minor Hockey Association's (learn to skate, IP - level one, IP - level two or rep development, as the case may be) program. Our team's first practice is scheduled for (day), (date), at (time), at (arena). A season schedule, socks and jerseys will be given to players at our first practice.

As a coach, my goals are to make the game of hockey fun and teach and develop the technical skills that the players will use throughout their hockey career. It is my philosophy to strive for equal attention, ice time and instruction for all players.

As a parent, you should strive to be a good role model for your child, as well. Please cheer him or her and his or her teammates on and give them positive encouragement at all times. Understand that your behaviour will rub off on your child, so if you do not appear to be having fun, neither will he or she.

Please ensure that your child arrives at the arena on time and well-hydrated, well-nourished and well-rested. Please take responsibility for the conduct of your child in the arena and the dressing room. Finally, please ensure that your child wears a full set of properly fitting and approved hockey equipment and has water on the bench. You can leave the rest to me!

Finally, please note that, as a coach, I am a volunteer and enjoy what I do. I am not perfect. If you have any questions or concerns throughout the season, please bring them to my attention, honouring the Sport Parent's Commitment from the Respect in Sport – Parent program and, in particular, the twenty four (24) hour rule.

Thanks and see you at the arena,

(Signature)

APPENDIX “G”

NIAGARA FALLS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION



PROGRAMS FOR PLAYERS 6 AND YOUNGER PRACTICE SEQUENCING, PHYSICAL PREPARATION, ETC.

Prepared by: Brandon Boone, initiation program contact person for 2014-2016

*** Adapted from the Niagara Falls Rivermen minor peewee AAA 2012-2013 player handbook. Please read with all changes required for initiation-level players.

Practice sequencing

The importance of practices to your development, as a hockey player, cannot be over-emphasized. Consider the following statistics published by Hockey Canada:

- each player will have the puck on his or her stick for an average of eight (8) seconds per game
- each player will take an average of one (1) to two (2) shots on goal per game
- one (1) efficient practice will give a player more skill development than eleven (11) games collectively

Studies show that, the better young people are at something, the more they will enjoy it, and the longer they will play. Many young people quit hockey because they get to the level where they are unable to compete, due to a lack of skill, and the game is no longer fun.

Thus, we will expect regular attendance and full effort at practices and ensure that they are well-planned. Despite this, we will devote a portion of each practice to fun, unstructured play. So, each of our practices will include the following five (5) components:

- off-ice warm-up
- on-ice warm-up
- fundamental skills (stations-based)
- fun game
- off-ice cool-down

Physical preparation

Preparation for practices and games begins at home, with proper nutrition, hydration and sleep.

When it comes to nutrition, the old sayings hold true – you are what you eat, and you can't drive a Ferrari on regular unleaded!! Hockey seasons are a marathon, consisting of numerous practices, games and team functions, not to mention school, extra-curricular and family obligations, all crammed into a seven (7) month schedule. Practices and games require short bursts of speed at full intensity, with quick changes in direction and physical punishment.

Mental clarity is required to make good decisions on the ice. You will, therefore, be at a significant disadvantage if your “energy tank” is anything less than full.

Hockey players require both good daily nutritional habits, on days where no practices or games are scheduled, and pre-game nutrition, designed to maximize energy on days where practices or games are scheduled. Canada’s Food Guide indicates that, at all times, you should limit foods and beverages that are high in calories, fat, sugar or salt (sodium), such as:

- cakes and pastries
- chocolate and candies
- cookies and granola bars
- donuts and muffins
- ice cream and frozen desserts
- french fries and potato chips
- nachos and other salty snacks
- fruit flavoured drinks, soft drinks, energy and sports drinks and sweetened drinks

Children have small appetites. Small, nutritious meals and snacks should be consumed, therefore, particularly prior to practices and games. The following are examples of foods that are low on the glycemic index, meaning that they maintain normal levels of blood sugar in the body and provide energy at a more sustained pace, such that they should be consumed as part of a pre-game meal or snack, two (2) to four (4) hours prior to practices and games:

- multigrain, wholegrain, wheat and dark rye breads
- Muesli, Special K, All-Bran and oatmeal cereals
- spaghetti, fettuccini, linguine and macaroni pastas, either plain or with tomato sauce
- long white rice
- baked, kidney and soy beans
- grapes, kiwi, apples, oranges and bananas
- broccoli, mushrooms and cauliflower
- apple, orange and cranberry juices

- skim to 2% white milk
- low fat yogurt

The following are examples of foods that are high on the glycemic index, meaning that they provide a burst of energy, typically followed by a huge let down. They should not be consumed, therefore, as part of your pre-game meal or snack, two (2) to four (4) hours prior to practices and games:

- white bread, plain bagels or baguettes
- Corn Flakes, Rice Chex or Cheerios cereals
- rice cakes, graham crackers, pretzels
- raisins, pineapple, watermelon
- carrots

We want you to feel light on your feet, not sluggish or lethargic, during practices and games. As such, you should plan pre-game meals and snacks that include foods that are low on the glycemic index, not high. It is critical to consume the correct foods at the correct times, for maximum energy and performance.

It is also critical to maintain proper hydration. On average, the human body is approximately sixty per cent (60%) water – our brains are about seventy per cent (70%) water, our blood eighty per cent (80%) and our lungs eighty five per cent (85%). Throughout the day, we lose water by going to the bathroom, breathing and, of course, sweating. Only oxygen is more vital in sustaining life, and we obtain that with every breath. Hydration is, therefore, the most important factor in maximizing energy and performance.

As Canada's Food Guide indicates, you should drink water regularly. It is a calorie-free way to quench your thirst and far less expensive than energy or sports drinks, with none of the accompanying sugars, artificial colours and flavours or electrolytes, which may do you more harm than good. Try to maintain hydration and satisfy your nutritional requirements, before, during and after practices and games, by drinking water and consuming foods that are low on the glycemic index, including those listed above, not marketed sugar drinks.

Monitor your hydration level through the colour of your urine. The clearer, the better. If you have bright yellow urine, you may be dehydrated and should drink water immediately.

Similarly, you should weigh yourself regularly, including before and after practices and games. There should not be a drastic gain or loss. This is particularly important for goaltenders, whose heavier equipment often results in greater sweating and dehydration.

Finally, as you might imagine, there is nothing like sleep to revitalize a tired body, give you more energy and help you think more clearly in practices and games. In fact, sleep is the most important non-nutrient that you can incorporate into your pre-game routine. Getting a good night's sleep accomplishes everything from cell repair, to memory consolidation, to body cleansing and rebuilding. An additional pre-game nap is even more beneficial.

The following are some tips to help you get the sleep that you require for maximum energy and performance:

- have a small, nutritious snack, consisting of foods that are low on the glycemic index, including those listed above, just prior to bed
- do your homework and socializing (surfing the internet, Facebook, Twitter, telephone calls, e-mails, text messages, etc.) in the afternoon, as soon as you get home from school, to encourage a pre-game nap and avoid late-night cramming
- read fiction prior to bed or a nap – it engages the imagination and demands present-state attention, rather than projection into the future and preoccupation or planning

Warm-up

While you may be in top form, in terms of your physical conditioning, vigorous sports like hockey require a proper warm-up to prepare the body for increased demands and to prevent injuries. A proper warm-up provides a number of benefits, including:

- increasing general body and tissue temperature
- increasing blood flow through the cardio-respiratory system and the working muscles
- increasing the body's metabolic processes
- decreasing resistance in connective tissues
- enhancing mental preparedness
- reducing risk of muscle or tendon pulls

A proper warm-up should focus, therefore, on the following:

- raising body temperature, resulting in increased heart and breathing rates

- engaging as many of the large muscle groups as possible, making tissues more flexible

The most common form of warm-up is based on static stretching. It involves gradually moving into a stretch position and holding it. Unfortunately, studies have shown that using static stretching alone, before a workout, actually hinders athletic performance.

Our warm-up, therefore, will be based on dynamic stretching. It will involve a series of callisthenic-type movements and physical exercises aimed at moving your body in a controlled manner through the same type of motions that will be required in the practice or game to follow. The goal is to ensure that you move under control through the entire range of motion, gradually increasing the intensity of the movements as the warm-up progresses.

Thus, before every practice and game, after players have dressed, we will be setting aside five (5) to ten (10) minutes in the dressing room for all players to warm-up. Exercises such as high knee marching, trunk rotations, lunges and arm circles will be used, alone and in combination, to get your heart and lungs working at a higher rate and to encourage a light sweat. We will start at a relatively low intensity and build from there, until the ice is ready and we are fully prepared, mentally and physically, to charge out onto it!!

When we hit the ice, we will maintain our momentum through warm-up drills that involve skating at high intensity, forwards and backwards, in straight lines and turning left and right, for a short duration.

Cool-down

A cool-down is the opposite of a warm-up. A warm-up prepares the body for exercise, whereas a cool-down recovers the body from exercise. A proper cool-down provides a number of benefits, including:

- aiding in the dissipation of waste products
- reducing the potential for muscle soreness
- reducing the chances of dizziness or fainting caused by the pooling of blood in the extremities
- reducing the level of adrenaline in the blood

It is generally agreed that static stretching during the cool-down is beneficial. Again, static stretching involves gradually moving into a stretch position and holding it. Our cool-down, therefore, will consist of five (5) to ten (10) minutes of light aerobic activity and static stretching in the dressing room, immediately after every practice and game, before players have undressed.

Physical recovery

The thirty (30) minute “window” after practices and games is the period when hockey players’ blood flow will be at its highest and their muscles will be the most receptive to replenishing energy stores. You should use it, therefore, to accelerate your recovery process, to ensure that you are physically and mentally ready for the demands of your next activity or exercise.

You should start the following recovery process as soon as you leave the ice:

- rehydrating – drink water, minimum of 250 ml
- refueling – consume carbohydrate-rich foods, such as fresh and dried fruits, granola bars, fruit bars, smoothies
- repairing muscle – consume food sources of protein, such as peanut or almond butter, yogurt, soy drink or milk

For healthy children, feeling miserable, sluggish or tired is a direct result of poor nutrition or hydration (i.e. either fueling or refueling) and/or not sleeping enough.