

# SEASONAL STRUCTURE



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## DEVELOPMENT MODEL VS COMPETITION MODEL

Associations are encouraged to ensure that they are implementing the Intro to Hockey model with a development focus as opposed to a competition focus.

Grouping of players is important for game play, and like-minded skill players should be placed together. However, this should not be at the expense of delivering a truly developmental program. Development needs to be the primary focus of the Intro to Hockey model.



DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOCUS	COMPETITION MODEL FOCUS
Age Appropriate	Winning
Ideal Seasonal Structure	Number of Games
Practice Format	Individual Success and Awards
Skill Acquisition	Comparing of Players
Coach Education and Support	Position and Sport Specialization
Parent Education	Systems and Strategy
Creating Meaningful Competition	Increased Travel



As coaches navigate through the Intro to Hockey model, priorities have been identified to simplify what is being worked on and in what format. Focusing on the five areas under each format will ensure players are receiving an age-appropriate start to reaching their potential as a player.

STATIONS	SMALL AREA GAMES	CROSS-ICE/ HALF-ICE
Fun and Enjoyment	Fun and Enjoyment	Fun and Enjoyment
Skill Acquisition	Puck Protection	Application of Skills
Error Detection/ Correction	Transition	Play in Traffic
Maximize Activity	Support	Battle/Compete
Build Confidence	Decision Making Skills	Tactics

# SEASONAL STRUCTURE

**THE SEASONAL STRUCTURE CAN TAKE MANY FORMS AND THERE IS FLEXIBILITY FOR TIMELINES, AS SEASON START DATES VARY BY ASSOCIATION. THE NUMBER OF GAMES AND PRACTICES ARE RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT**

## 1. EVALUATION PHASE

- i. No evaluation skates prior to or during the first week of school.
- ii. Must provide a minimum of 4 skates before evaluations begin.
- iii. Must provide a minimum of 3 evaluation skates before grouping of players.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT PHASE

During the development phase, coaches should be focused on skill development. Coaches should focus on developing fundamental movement skills like striding, turning, and stopping, manipulation skills like shooting, passing, puck control and the very important motor skills of agility, balance, coordination.

# SEASONAL STRUCTURE CONT.

## 3. REGULAR SEASON PHASE

The regular season phase represents the bulk of the seasonal structure. It is important that coaches continue to focus on skill development during practice sessions. Hockey Canada has developed resources to support coaches in their efforts to deliver practice plans. The Hockey Canada Network and the Drill Hub can be found at [www.hockeyalberta.ca](http://www.hockeyalberta.ca).



**Hockey Canada Network**

Hockey Canada

Everyone

### INTRO TO HOCKEY SEASONAL STRUCTURE

Months	September - October	November - March
Phase	Development	Regular
Approx. Dates	Sept. 15 - Oct. 31	Nov. 1 - Mar. 22
Ice Sessions (Maximum)	Development Season	Regular Season
26 weeks	6 Weeks	20 Weeks
50 Practices	12 Practices	38 Practices
25-30 Games (including Jamborees)	2 Games	23-28 Games
3 Jamborees/ Festivals	0 Jamborees/ Festivals	3 Jamborees/ Festivals

Seasonal Practice to Game Ratio	2:1
Recommended Ice Session Times	Weekdays, no earlier than 5pm Weekends, no earlier than 8am

ENSURE ADEQUATE SLEEP OF 10-13 HOURS/NIGHT AND 30-MINUTE NAP BETWEEN 2-4PM. ESTABLISH PRE-BEDTIME ROUTINE, REDUCE OR ELIMINATE SCREEN TIME AND ESTABLISH PREDICTABLE MEAL TIMES FOR YOUNG PLAYERS AGED 5-8 YEARS OLD





# GROUPING OF PLAYERS

It is recommended that Intro to Hockey participants be split into single year age groups, however two-year age groups are acceptable.

Minor Hockey Associations can choose how many players are on a team. The game play format is 4 vs 4 and the ideal number of players on a team in the Two Team Two Game model is up to 18 with each half ice team comprised of 8 skaters and 1 goaltender.

With the added flexibility associations can become creative in grouping of players for practices and games. Registering players as a program enables associations to move players around as needed to ensure meaningful practice and competition during games. When grouping, the social, emotional, mental and psychological development of the participants must be considered rather than just the physical abilities.

DIVISION NAME	AGE AS OF DEC 31	DIVISION NAME	AGE AS OF DEC. 31
Minor U7	5-year olds	Minor U9	7-year olds
Major U7	6-year olds	Major U9	8-year olds
Combined U7	5- and 6-year olds	Combined U9	7- and 8-year olds

Based on Hockey Canada's player development model, Intro to Hockey coaches are to utilize the following percentages of time when delivering practices.

## U7

85 % - Technical Skills  
15 % - Individual Tactics  
0 % - Team Tactics  
0 % - Team Play Systems  
0 % - Strategy

## U9

75 % - Technical Skills  
15 % - Individual Tactics  
10 % - Team Tactics  
0 % - Team Play Systems  
0 % - Strategy

01

**TECHNICAL SKILL:** fundamental skills that are required to play the game - skating, shooting, passing

02

**INDIVIDUAL TACTIC:** action by one player using one or a combination of technical skills to create an advantage or take away the advantage of an opponent (1 on 1)

03

**TEAM TACTIC:** collective action of two or more players using technical skills and/or individual tactics to create an advantage or take away the advantage of an opponent (3 on 2)

04

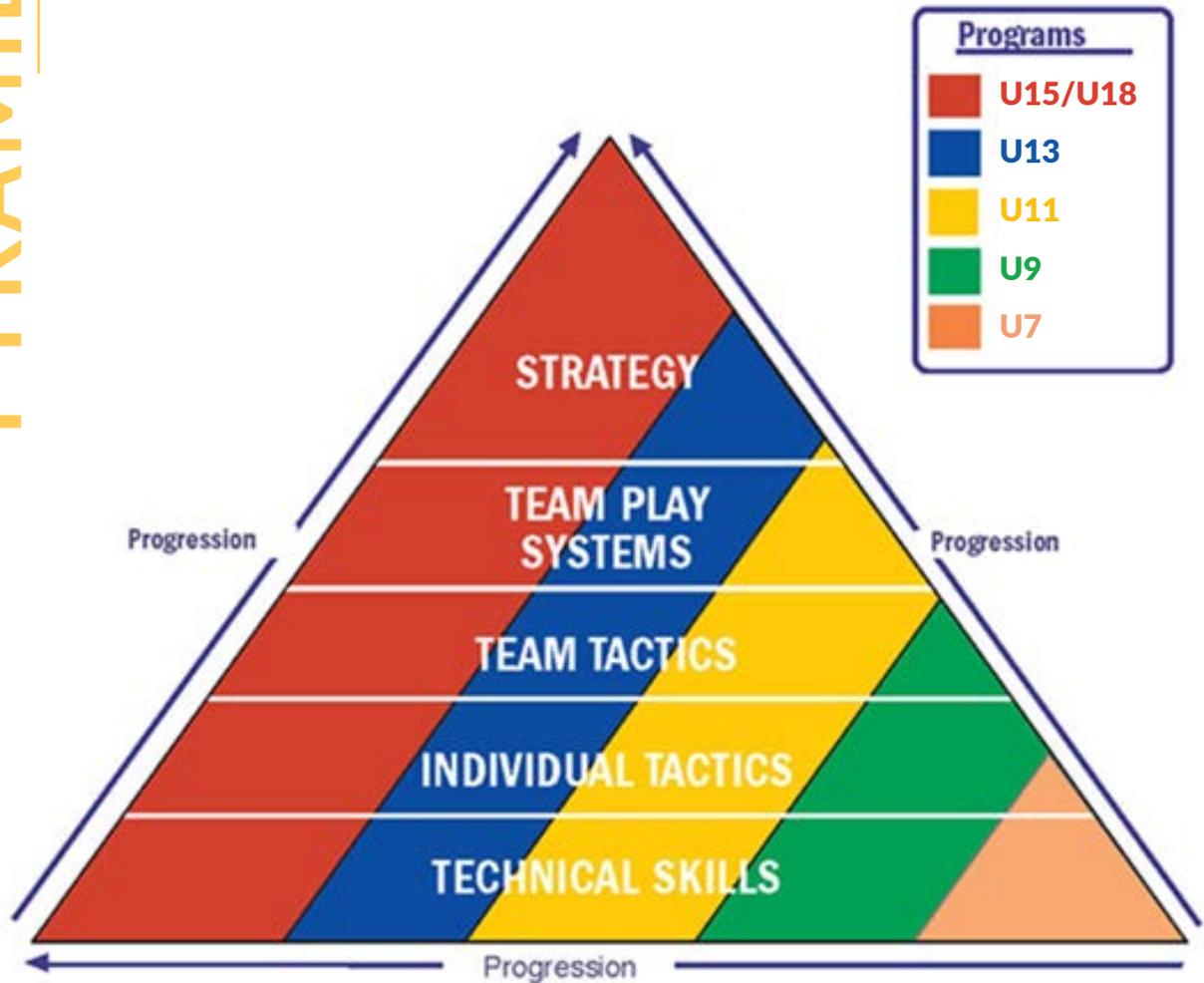
**TEAM PLAY SYSTEM:** a pattern of play in which the movement of all players is integrated in a coordinated fashion to accomplish an offensive or defensive objective. (2-1-2 forecheck)

05

**STRATEGY:** the selection of team play systems in order to impose upon the opposition, the style of play and tactics which will build on the coach's, team strengths and neutralize those of the opponent while at the same time taking advantage of the opponent's weaknesses.



# PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PYRAMID



## PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT

Full Ice Practice: 2-4 teams on ice	Half Ice Practice: 1-2 teams on ice
<b>PRACTICE FORMAT</b>	
<b>ENERGIZER DRILL</b>	Engage players through a fun game or unstructured drill to start.
<b>3-5 STATION SETUP</b>	Focus on technical skill development by utilizing circuits and continuous drills
<b>FINSHER DRILL</b>	Fun small area game, relay race or high energy activity to finish.

When splitting up players for station work in practices separate based on skill so all players can be challenged by enabling coaches to progress and regress drills as needed based on the skill set of each station group.



# FAQ

01

## **WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF PRACTICING IN SMALL AREAS AND PLAYING HALF-ICE GAMES?**

Small spaces equate to being more engaged in the play and activity for young players. Through small area station-based practices and half ice games, players are closer to the play and have much more opportunity to be engaged in the game. Regardless of the skill level or the ability of each player, opportunities to be engaged in the play double when the playing area is smaller. NHL Analytics research illustrated that all skill areas of the game improved substantially when players played in small spaces more suited to their age and skill level.

02

## **HOW WILL PLAYER DEVELOPMENT BE AFFECTED IF THERE ARE NO OFFSIDES OR ICINGS CALLED?**

The game play model is a 4 vs 4 model on half ice. Learning offside and icing will come in time, but the primary focus of age-appropriate training and programming needs to be on skill development in the areas of skating, puck control, pass receiving and shooting. Concepts like offside, icing, positional play and face-offs (which are mental skills) can be introduced when players move to the full ice game play model in the transition to U11 hockey.

03

## **SHOULD PLAYERS AND/OR TEAMS BE TIERED?**

Grouping of players of like ability can be a very important principle for setting up young players for success and enjoyment. The focus of the Intro to Hockey model is player development. It is important in both station-based practices and in half-ice game play that players be grouped by similar ability levels when possible or necessary. It is recommended that prior to the start of the half-ice game(s) coaches of opposing teams may wish to discuss possible line combinations to ensure that the skill level of the players on the ice is similar which will allow more puck touches and fun for all the players participating.

## 04

### WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD BE FOLLOWED WHEN STORING AND SETTING UP EQUIPMENT AT COMMUNITY ARENAS?

Each facility in Alberta is unique and will have its own Standard Operating Procedures when it comes to the storage, the set-up, and the take down of the portable board system or the foam divider system. In many cases, municipalities have developed these procedures to apply to all arenas within their jurisdiction.

It will be important to work with the facility's management to ensure that proper protocols are being followed. This will maximize efficiency, ensure safe practices for all, and promote a harmonious relationship between the arena staff and members of the local minor hockey association.

Hockey Canada's liability insurance covers all involved if they are performing a function for the Minor Hockey Association. This includes coaches and parents who may be setting up and taking down the board system. Hockey Alberta recommends these individuals wear helmets and skates when doing so. Associations should hold a training session for coaches and parents to educate for safety and efficiencies in setting up, moving for floods and taking down the boards.

## 05

### WHERE CAN PORTABLE BOARDS OR FOAM BARRIERS BE PURCHASED?

There are numerous suppliers for portable boards, foam barriers, and small nets. It is advisable to check local sources to ensure best pricing on the shipping of product. On a national level, two suppliers handle large volume orders for these products.

OmniSport Inc  
14 Boulder Blvd.  
Stony Plain, AB T7Z 1V7  
Phone: 780-968-2344  
<http://www.omnisport.ca>

Athletica Sport Systems Inc.  
554 Parkside Drive  
Waterloo, ON N2L 5Z4  
Phone: 1-877-778-5911  
<http://athletica.com>



INTRO TO HOCKEY MODEL  
[HOCKEYALBERTA.CA](http://HOCKEYALBERTA.CA)