

# INTRO TO HOCKEY MODEL

## [SEASON STRUCTURE]

A guide for the introduction and implementation of the Intro to Hockey Model for U7 and U9 Hockey in Alberta.

**Updated September 2024**



# SEASONAL STRUCTURE

## 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.

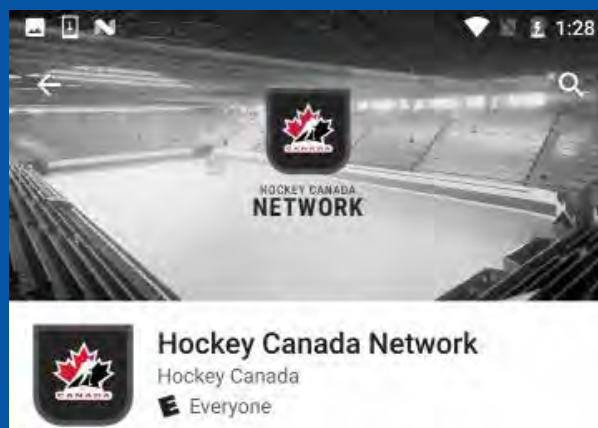
## 2. DEVELOPMENT PHASE

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).



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	





# 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.





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