



# U9

## CANADIAN PLAYER PATHWAY



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SECTION 1:

# Introduction to U9 Hockey



make  
hockey  
more

# Introduction

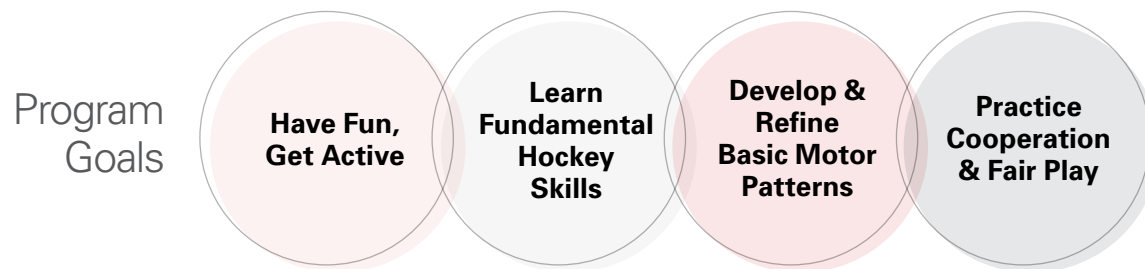
The first years of hockey need to be a positive experience. A fun and exciting start gives young players the opportunity to enjoy hockey for life!

If a beginner has fun, develops basic skills and builds confidence, there is a better chance they will enjoy themselves. But if the early experience is unrewarding, they may never discover all Canada's game has to offer.

U9 hockey should be delivered through a progressive, learn-to-play teaching curriculum for 7-8-year-olds. Children learn best through practice drills and skill sessions, as well as informal games like shinny, freeze tag and obstacle courses.

The skills of skating, puck control, passing and shooting are introduced and refined one step at a time. The focus should always be on fun and skill development, but the early years of hockey should also allow youngsters to experience fitness, fair play and cooperation.

To ensure a positive experience, a coaching clinic has been designed for the on-ice coaches that focuses on communication, teaching skills, leadership, skill analysis, lesson organization, and safety and risk management.



Hockey Canada wants every Canadian youngster to have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from a program designed to meet their specific needs, one that ensures progressive skill development through well-delivered practice sessions and age-appropriate game play in an environment suited to their skill level.

U9 hockey serves as the foundation upon which the entire hockey experience is built. It is a crucial piece in building the skills of players at every level – players benefit from getting the ‘right start’ in the game.

“Learning the basic skills at a young age will set the foundation for everything a player will accomplish in the game of hockey.”

**Corey McNabb**

Director, Hockey Development  
Hockey Canada





## SECTION 2:

# Rationale for Programming



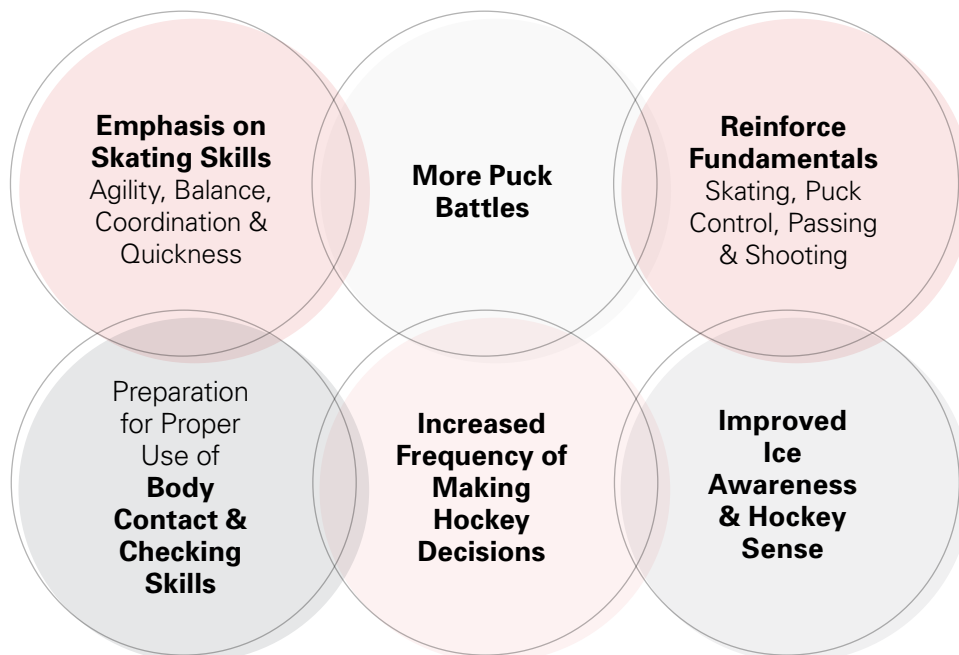
# Benefits of Half-Ice Hockey



There can be concerns from parents about how small-area games may impact their child's hockey development, but parents should trust Hockey Canada and its research. Putting young players into a competitive environment too early will compromise their development; they need to be placed into competitive situations that suit their age-specific abilities. This is why Hockey Canada's **Long-Term Player Development Model** is so important.

Dividing the playing surface is a decision that has been made in consultation with experts in athlete development. It is important to understand the benefits of cross-ice hockey and why Hockey Canada has a national policy ensuring all U9 hockey is played in smaller, modified spaces.

There are several advantages to the smaller-surface games model:



“You have to be able to make plays in pretty small areas. The more you practice in small spaces, the better off you are.”

**Sidney Crosby**  
Canada's National Men's Team

# Benefits of Half-Ice Hockey



2X

## Puck Touches

Players are close to the play and can touch the puck more often, meaning opportunities to be engaged offensively are doubled.

6X

## Shot Attempts

Players are closer to the puck at all times and the puck is put towards the net much more often.

3X

## Shots on Goal

Players are much closer to the net, skate shorter distances and have increased opportunities to create offence.

2X

## Pass Attempts

Players pass and attempt to pass the puck more often – with and without the puck, they are closer to the game.

5X

## Passes Received

When passes are shorter (5 to 10 feet), accuracy improves and players have more success receiving the pass.

“You need to be able to make quick passes and have quick communication. Small-area games are important.”

**Brianne Jenner**  
Canada's National Women's Team

# U9 Principles

Dr. Stephen Norris has consulted with Hockey Canada in the areas of player development and performance programming for a number of years. He was one of the founding members and contributors to the 'Canadian Sport for Life' movement focusing on athlete/participant development. Dr. Norris contributed to Hockey Canada in the design of the **Long-Term Player Development Model** and Player Pathways.

In each area outlined below, rationale has been provided and has been supplemented by Dr. Norris.

Player evaluation/selection cannot be scheduled prior to the start of the school year.

- Give local hockey associations and parents back the summer – the season does not need to start this early only to be finished at the end of January or early in February (start later and end later).
- Give local hockey associations a chance to get organized and begin planning.
- The start of school year can be very stressful for young players, and they do not need hockey evaluations starting at the same time as the school year.

*The notion of evaluations taking place weeks, if not months, in advance of the actual season for this age group makes very little sense due to the realities of child development during these periods.*

*The summer months are a time where youngsters not only consolidate previous experiences, but also advance their competency due to aspects such as recovery from earlier specificity, demonstrate adaptation of all previous experiences to new situations and activities over the summer months, and reveal growth and development opportunities that occur naturally – physical, psychological, cognitive, motor development, social, etc.*

*Everyone should understand that the return-to-school period (both the couple of weeks before, the week of and the 'wash-in period' until the student is settled back into the routine) is an extremely stressful period for the student.*



Minimum of four practices and/or skill sessions prior to formal player evaluation/selection.

- A player's first experience in the new hockey season should not be a formal evaluation – this gives all players the opportunity to get back on the ice in a 'player-friendly' scenario.
- Level the playing field; not all players have a chance to go to hockey schools or prep camps prior to the start of the season.
- Provide local hockey associations the opportunity to run their own prep camp instead of members spending money outside the association.

*There is a substantial benefit for children to have the opportunity to participate in four ice sessions prior to formal selection or evaluation. Players feel more relaxed and are able to perform at a higher level, compared to being evaluated in their first time back on the ice. By providing these opportunities, players are placed in a situation where stress has been mitigated and they are able to showcase their ability.*

Player evaluation/selection must be a minimum of three formal sessions. Recommendation is one skills session, one small-area games session and one half-ice game.

- Players need a chance to be evaluated – standardization means transparency, fairness and consistency.
- Provide coaches with the foundation for a solid and quantifiable evaluation.

*This follows the previous point of providing ALL players with the opportunity to re-engage with hockey. For example, it would be unacceptable for a school in the first week of September to give children an exam they must pass, or else the child would not be permitted to take that subject during the school year. This would be unacceptable to parents, yet this is the impact of evaluations early in the process before anything is taught.*

## Development time following team selection and prior to the start of the regular season.

- It is very important to provide coaches with the opportunity to develop and improve their players' skills prior to organized games.
- The progression should be skills before tactics and tactics before systems.
- This will eliminate or reduce the focus on and/or pressure to win.

*Professional and/or knowledgeable individuals wishing to provide positive developmental experiences for children or youth should reinforce the need for an instructional or practice component prior to the start of the season. With the implementation of this policy, we are moving forward to not only accept, but welcome development opportunities for the betterment of players.*





## SECTION 3: Seasonal Structure



The U9 seasonal structure can take on many forms. There is flexibility in the recommended timeframes local hockey associations can use to build their seasonal plan. If the season starts in October or even as late as November, the local hockey association should still follow the guidelines of a balanced season approach. Some dates and timeframes are guidelines, while others are fixed. The number of games and practices are also recommendations by Hockey Canada supported by the **Long-Term Player Development Model**.

## The Ideal Season

Young players have an opportunity to continue their development while having a positive and fun hockey experience. The ideal season does not conflict with the start of the school year, provides a fair evaluation/selection process and is structured to maximize development opportunities.

The U9 Player Pathway and corresponding coaching materials provide progressive and incremental skill development. By using the Hockey Canada Skills Manuals on the **Hockey Canada Network** and **Drill Hub**, coaches are provided with the framework for practice sessions that meet their players' needs. The monthly seasonal goals should correspond with the U9 Skills Matrix (Section 5) that outlines the skills players should be exposed to throughout the season.

### 1. Preparation/Evaluation Phase UP TO 4 WEEKS

### 2. Development Phase UP TO 8 WEEKS

### 3. Regular Season Phase UP TO 16 WEEKS • 14 WEEKS IF TRANSITION

### 4. End-of-Season Phase UP TO 4 WEEKS • 6 WEEKS IF TRANSITION

# Annual Calendar & Seasonal Phases

## 1. Preparation/Evaluation Phase UP TO 4 WEEKS

- Players are grouped with like-ability players for maximum growth. Players should not be cut.
  - Hockey Canada recommends 18 players per team.
  - Allows for four lines and two goaltenders (4 on 4).
  - Tiering can be done by team or by association to ensure skill-based balance.
- No evaluation/selection during the off-season phase (March through August).
- No evaluation/selection prior to the first week of school, or during the first week if it starts the week after Labour Day.
- Where school starts prior to Labour Day, there must be four skates/practices starting the week following Labour Day before evaluation/selection commences.
- Minimum of four practices/skill sessions prior to formal evaluation/selection starting.
- Minimum of three formal evaluation/selection sessions.
  - Recommend one skills session, one small-area games session, one half-ice game.

## 2. Development Phase UP TO 8 WEEKS

- Ideal practice-to-game ratio is 3:1 – three practices to one game played.
- Focus on skill development:
  - Fundamental movement skills: striding, turning, stopping
  - Manipulation skills: shooting, passing, puck control
  - Motor skills: agility, balance, coordination
- Fun and safe environment to promote self-confidence.



## 3. Regular Season Phase

UP TO 16 WEEKS • 14 WEEKS IF TRANSITION

- Ideal practice-to-game ratio is 2:1 – two practices to one game played.
- Continued focus on skill acquisition and skill development.
- Recommend a maximum of 40 games (exhibition, league, tournament/jamboree/festival).
- Recommended seasonal breaks:
  - Season should allow for two seasonal breaks (not including Christmas/long weekends).
  - Minimum five days without a scheduled game or mandatory practice.

## 4. End-of-Season Phase

UP TO 4 WEEKS • 6 WEEKS IF TRANSITION

- Reinforce skill-development elements in practices.
- Tournaments are jamboree/festival format, engaging players in a fun environment:
  - JAMBOREE: Coming together of several players who are then placed onto teams. Games may or may not be competitive and the emphasis is on fun.
  - FESTIVAL: Coming together of teams to participate in games and fun activities. Games may be competitive, but no standings are kept.
- There are no playoffs in U9 hockey.
- U9 players can transition to full-ice hockey January 15 or later (see *Playing Surface*, Section 4).
- Important to continue practices through transition to introduce full-ice concepts.



# U9 Seasonal Structure

## OPTION 1: FULL SEASON OF HALF-ICE PLAY

PHASE	Prep/Evaluation Phase & Development Phase	Regular Season Phase	End-of-Season Phase
DURATION	Up to <b>12 WEEKS</b> prior to the start of the Regular Season phase	Up to <b>16 WEEKS</b> after the completion of the Development phase	Up to <b>4 WEEKS</b> after the conclusion of the Regular Season phase
ICE SET-UP	HALF-ICE GAMES	HALF-ICE GAMES	HALF-ICE GAMES
BALANCE	<b>40%</b> OF THE SEASON	<b>50%</b> OF THE SEASON	<b>10%</b> OF THE SEASON
VOLUME	UP TO <b>12</b> WEEKS	UP TO <b>16</b> WEEKS	UP TO <b>4</b> WEEKS
PRACTICES	<b>14</b> PRACTICE SESSIONS	<b>34</b> PRACTICE SESSIONS	<b>7</b> PRACTICE SESSIONS
GAMES	UP TO <b>6</b> GAMES	UP TO <b>22</b> GAMES	UP TO <b>12</b> GAMES
JAMBOREES	<b>1</b> JAMBOREE	<b>1</b> JAMBOREE	<b>1</b> JAMBOREE

# U9 Seasonal Structure

## OPTION 2: TRANSITION TO FULL-ICE PLAY

PHASE	Prep/Evaluation Phase & Development Phase	Regular Season Phase	End-of-Season Phase
DURATION	Up to <b>12 WEEKS</b> prior to the start of the Regular Season phase	Up to <b>14 WEEKS</b> after the completion of the Development phase	Up to <b>6 WEEKS</b> after the conclusion of the Regular Season phase
ICE SET-UP	HALF-ICE GAMES	HALF-ICE GAMES	<b>MAY PROGRESS TO FULL-ICE</b>
BALANCE	<b>45%</b> OF THE SEASON	<b>45%</b> OF THE SEASON	<b>10%</b> OF THE SEASON
VOLUME	UP TO <b>12</b> WEEKS	UP TO <b>14</b> WEEKS	UP TO <b>6</b> WEEKS
PRACTICES	<b>14</b> PRACTICE SESSIONS	<b>34</b> PRACTICE SESSIONS	<b>7</b> PRACTICE SESSIONS
GAMES	UP TO <b>6</b> GAMES	UP TO <b>22</b> GAMES	UP TO <b>12</b> GAMES
JAMBOREE/TOURNAMENTS	<b>1</b> JAMBOREE	<b>1</b> JAMBOREE/TOURNAMENT	<b>1</b> JAMBOREE/TOURNAMENT



## SECTION 4:

# Requirements & Recommendations







The maximum size of the ice surface is 100 feet by 85 feet.

# Playing Surface

● For single-year age divisions:

**Seven-year-old** games will be played on half-ice all year.

**Eight-year-old** games will be played half-ice from October through December and may transition to full ice January 15 or later.

- Use September as a development month – no games, just practices.
- Play a limited half-ice game schedule from October to December.
- Use January as a development month, helping transition kids to full ice.
- Play a full-ice game schedule beginning January 15 or later.
- Development of a full curriculum for the eight-year-old and the transition to full-ice programming at U11.

● For combined age divisions:

**Three options available** to choose from:

- Deliver half-ice programming for the full year to players 7-8 years old.
- Deliver half-ice programming for the full year to players 7-8 years old and provide a six-week transition program to the players that are eight years old in February and March.
- Deliver half-ice programming with transition to full ice January 15 or later with the understanding that a seven-year-old will repeat the programming as an eight-year-old.

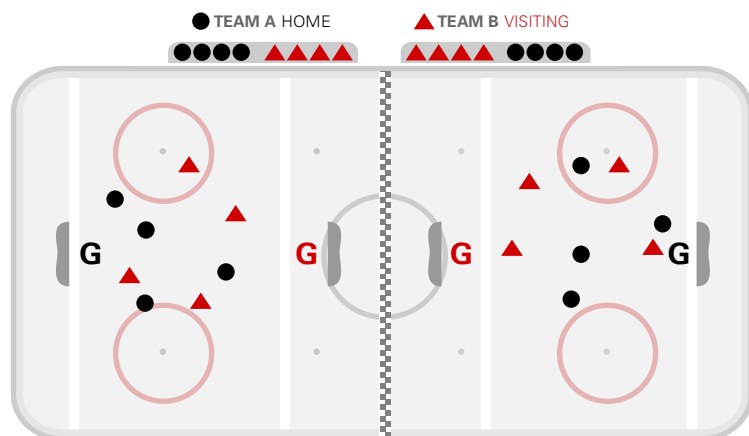
**\* Each Hockey Canada Member will determine if a transition to full-ice is permitted within their jurisdiction, based on the options included in this section.**



# Playing Surface Set-Up

The game play format used in U9 half-ice hockey is the Two-Team, Two-Game Model. This model is built on two teams playing one another in two halves. Each U9 team is divided into two units. Each team is required to dress two goaltenders, one for each half-ice game.

In some communities, team composition may be smaller. If this is the case, the ice is still divided but only one end will be used for game play. The other portion of the ice can be used as a practice surface.



TWO TEAMS – Two Half-Ice Games Model



TWO TEAMS – One Half-Ice Game with Practice

# Game Set-Up and Flow

## TWO-TEAM, TWO-GAME MODEL

- Each team will be divided into two units of players, each with a goaltender. Smaller numbers allow for players to double-shift to ensure there are always four players on the ice. Coaches must make sure all players take turns double-shifting.
- Each team has two goaltenders, one for each half of the ice. This allows for two larger teams playing each other in two halves. If the two teams are balanced, one team's unit can switch at half time to play against the other opposing unit.
- It is recommended that in each half, the centre-ice spot should be marked to indicate where the face-off will take place. This is to be established at the midpoint between both nets.
- Teams will share the player benches, with each team using the gate closest to their net.
- The score clock can be used to keep time for both games simultaneously.
- The home team shall defend the two ends of the rink, while the visiting team shall defend the centre-ice nets. After the first half, the visiting team switches ends and switches benches so players can play against the other half of the opposing team.
- No score is kept, and game sheets are optional.



# Half-Ice Game Play Rules

- Hockey Canada Playing Rules are followed except as stated below.
- 4-on-4 (plus a goaltender in full goalie equipment).
- Game format: two periods with a run-time clock, not to exceed 60 minutes total.
- Minimum of one official per game.
- Timed buzzer or whistle for line changes:
  - Game does not stop; players change on the fly at buzzer/whistle.
  - If there are fewer than four players on the bench, the active player designated to stay out for the following shift must return to the bench area prior to continuing play.
  - On the buzzer/whistle, players must relinquish control of the puck immediately and vacate the ice. The new players enter the ice immediately. Failure to immediately relinquish control of the puck or new players entering the ice surface prematurely may result in a penalty (*see Penalties*).
- Shift length will not exceed two minutes.
- Incidental contact may happen, but body-checking is not permitted.
- No icing or offside.
- Face-offs to start each half.
- Change of possession:
  - Continuous play – when whistles lead to a change in puck possession, the official will signal the attacking players to back off three metres. Once the attackers have moved back, play may resume as soon as the possession team has control of the puck.
  - Goaltender freezes the puck – the official blows the whistle to indicate the attacking team backs off three metres and the defending team gets possession.
  - Puck shot out of play – the offending team backs off three metres and the official gives the non-offending team a new puck.
- Blue puck (4 oz) or black puck (6 oz). (BOTH ARE ACCEPTABLE)
- Net size – 2x3, 3x4, 4x6. (ALL ARE ACCEPTABLE)
- Penalties:
  - Minor penalties are noted, with the official briefly raising their arm to indicate a penalty will be assessed. At the conclusion of the shift, the official notifies the team of the infraction and the number of the offending player.
  - If the offending team controls the puck, the official blows the whistle and calls for a change of possession; the non-offending team is given a three-metre cushion.
  - The offending player will sit out the next shift, but the team will play even strength.
  - Should an infraction occur that would normally require a player to be ejected from the game (game misconduct, match penalty, gross misconduct), the player will be removed for the remainder of that game. Even under these circumstances, teams will not play shorthanded and no game incident report will be required.

# Fair and Equal Ice Time

- All players should have the same opportunity to contribute, regardless of skill or ability. A coach's responsibility is to develop all players. Shortening of the bench in an attempt to win games is not permitted. All players and goaltenders should receive fair and as close to equal as possible ice time.

## Recommendations

### Positional rotation:

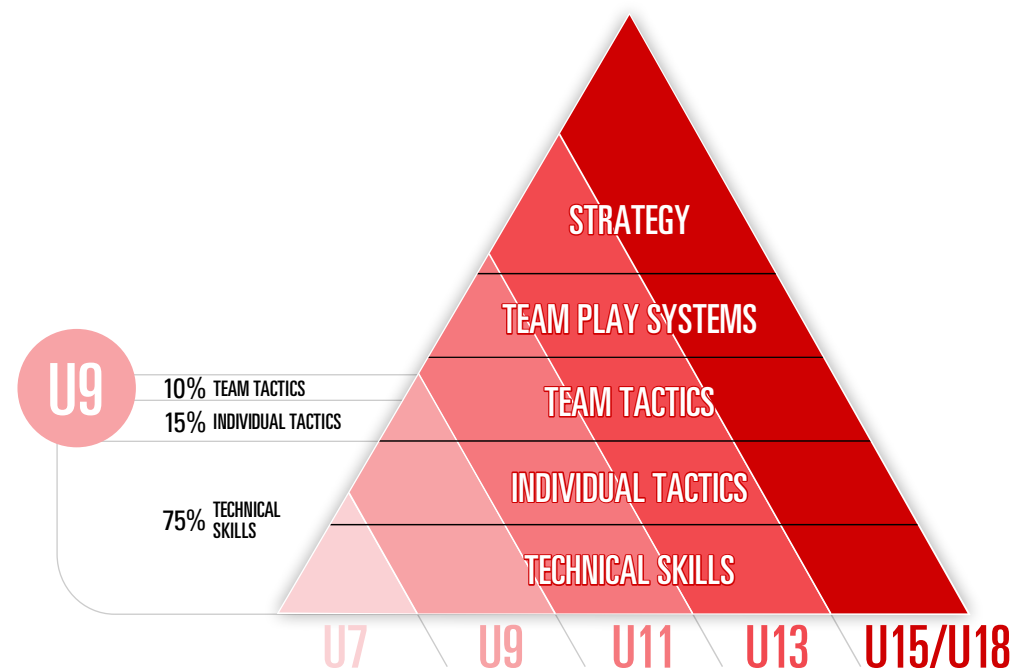
- All players play all positions – forward/defence/goaltender.
- All players get a chance to start the game or start the second half if numbers allow.

### Goaltender rotation:

- No full-time goaltenders.
- All players get a chance to play goal (in full goaltender equipment) before players who want a second chance will play again.

# Focus on Skill Development

- Small-area games in practice / station-based practices / skill-focused drills.
- Only 25% of practice time should be spent on tactics, with 75% of practice time spent on skills.
- Basic positional play and rules can be introduced at the end of the season or prior to the start of the U11 regular season. Basic defensive-zone positioning, offside, icing, etc., can be introduced during the ice sessions prior to evaluations or after teams are selected.



# Officiating

While U9 hockey is not part of the Hockey Canada Officiating Program (HCOP) system, associations can use developing officials in a one-official system. This provides officials with an opportunity to experience several aspects of officiating, while keeping operating costs at a manageable level.

There are benefits for officials to build foundational skills. It is a valuable opportunity for newer officials to put on their uniform, get into live action and learn officiating basics in a less formal and positive atmosphere. Basic skills include dropping pucks, skating skills, foundational positioning, spatial awareness, establishing good sightlines, communicating with coaches and making decisions such as goals and minor penalties.

In addition to young officials applying their skills in a game environment, U9 half-ice games also provide an excellent opportunity for senior officials to mentor newcomers by shadowing them on the ice or evaluating them from the stands.

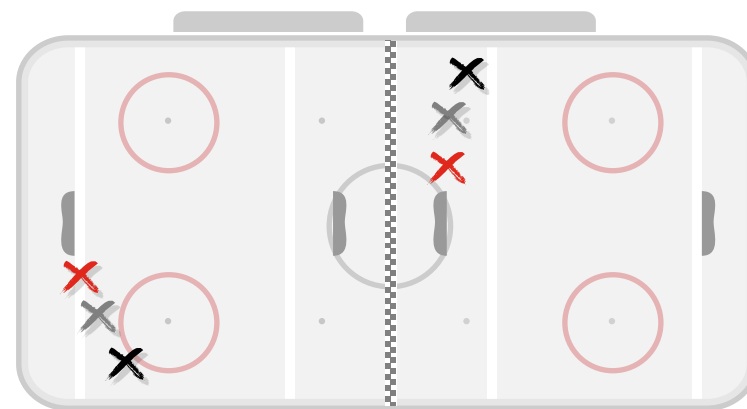
Having an official for half-ice games provides players with more structure. It also presents a more realistic game environment, while allowing the coaches to keep their focus on the players.

Flexibility is an important component to operating in a one-official system. There is no absolute way to handle every possible scenario. However, game flow and establishing a basic structure to the game is the primary focus.

# Positioning of the Official

Foundational positioning principles will be used. In a half-ice set-up, general positioning is used to get officials comfortable with their proximity to the goal. Officials should follow the play approximately 2-3 metres behind the puck carrier and remain about one metre from the boards or playing-area perimeters.

Officials are encouraged to move towards the net on goal situations and away from the play towards the boards as play comes towards them, allowing players to pass by; the official can then follow at a safe distance.



Half-ice positioning of the official

- X — At the net
- X — Moving to the net
- X — Away from the play





## SECTION 5:

# Coach Requirements & Resources



# Head coaches of U9 teams require:

1. Hockey University  
Online Community Coach training
2. NCCP Coach 1  
Intro to Coach  
(only Trained status needed, not Certified)
3. Respect in Sport  
Activity Leader/Coach



## Overview

The Coach 1 – Intro to Coach clinic through the **National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP)** provides coaches with the tools needed to work with players in the U9 program, as well as providing instruction in the delivery of the program itself.

The Community Coach Stream clinic is available through Hockey Canada’s online **Hockey University**.

With a focus on providing a positive experience for young hockey players, the U9 program builds upon a number of values that provide quality experiences, including:

- Providing a safe environment for the introduction of fundamental skills.
- Developing an understanding of basic teamwork through structured activities and game-like situations.
- Introducing participants to fair and cooperative play.
- Refining basic motor patterns and building self-confidence.
- Providing an environment that challenges individuals positively and rewards the participants.
- Providing opportunities to build a lifestyle of fitness and activity.

# Resources

Resources are available to support local hockey associations and coaches in the design and delivery of a hockey experience that meets the needs of 7-8-year-old players. Coaches should access both the Hockey Canada Network and Drill Hub to ensure they have up-to-date resources to support the U9 program. A variety of materials can also be downloaded [here](#).

## Ice-Session/Practice Plans

Plans are available through the Hockey Canada Network or Drill Hub as part of the Hockey Canada Skills Manual series, mapping out easy-to-follow ice sessions. U9 players need to progress throughout the plans to ensure they are exposed to age-appropriate drills and activities that will develop their confidence. The goal is to support the development of a sound skill base so young players will enjoy the game.

The plans consider the needs of young hockey players building their skills and are designed to serve as a model for on-ice delivery. Local hockey associations are not required to follow each ice session exactly as planned. However, coaches should be encouraged to use fundamentals of the plans so players are guided through a skill-development program designed specifically for U9. Using the direction provided in the skills manuals, coaches will gain the confidence and creativity to begin designing their own practice plans.

## Hockey Canada Network

The **Hockey Canada Network** is an iOS and Android app that contains a wealth of information for coaches and instructors. The entire series of Hockey Canada Skills Manuals and the Skills of Gold instructional videos are available on the Network. It includes the entire series of 32 lesson plans designed specifically for the U9 program, available to coaches and instructors at no cost. While there is a fee for full access, creating an account on the Network provides free access to all U9 resources.

## Drill Hub

**Drill Hub** also provides coaches of U9 players with access to all ice-session plans for free. Coaches can sign up to have free access to Hockey Canada's growing library of drills. Users can create their own practice plans or use suggested plans, which are easy to print or view on most devices.

# U9 Skills Matrix

The **Long-Term Player Development Model** places U9 hockey at the Fundamentals 2 stage, with programming focused on fundamental skill development. The U9 skills matrix identifies the skills players must have the opportunity to develop through progressive and meaningful practice sessions.

## U9 Skills

LTPD STAGE  
FUNDAMENTALS 2

Balance & Agility	Edge Control	Starting & Stopping	Forward Skating & Striding	Backward Skating	Turning & Crossovers
Basic stance	Figure 8's– forward–inside & outside edge	Front v-start	C-cuts left foot/right foot/alternating	C-cuts left foot/right foot	Glide turns/tight turns
Balance on one foot	Figure 8's– backward–inside & outside edge	Crossover start	Crossunders	Gliding on two skates backward	C-cuts–around circle–outside foot– forward & backward
Gliding on two skates	Heel to heel (Mohawk)	Backward c-cut start	T-push	Gliding on one skate backward	Crossovers– forward & backward
Gliding on one skate–forward & backward	One-leg weaving–forward/backward	One o'clock – eleven o'clock	Forward striding	Backward striding 1 crossover/reach	Pivots– backward to forward & forward to backward
Lateral crossovers		Outside leg stop			Pivots– open & reverse
		Two-foot parallel stop			
		One-leg backward stop			
		Two-leg backward stop			
Stationary Puck Control	Moving Puck Control	Stationary Passing & Receiving	Moving Passing & Receiving	Shooting	Individual Offensive Tactics
Stance	Narrow/Wide	Stationary forehand pass	Moving forehand pass	Forehand– wrist shot	Body fakes
Narrow/Wide	Open ice carry– forehand & backhand	Stationary bankhand pass	Moving bankhand pass	Backhand– sweep shot	Stick fakes
Side–front–side	Weaving with puck	Stationary bank pass	Pass & follow	Forehand/backhand shots in motion	Dekes
Toe drag–front & side	Toe drag–front & side			Forehand– flip shot	Moves in combination
Attack the triangle	Attack the triangle			Backhand– flip shot	Net drives
Individual Defensive Tactics	Team Play				
Angling	Basic positioning–all players should play all positions				
Basic 1-on-1					
Escape moves					
Puck retrievals					





## SECTION 6:

# Frequently Asked Questions





# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. What are the core requirements of the U9 Game Play Model?

The model was designed to maximize the opportunity to get all players into the game. The core elements are running time, continuous play on shift changes, no offside, icing or face-offs after goals, and penalties are called.

## 2. How will player development be affected if there is no offside or icing called during game play?

Learning offside and icing will come in time, but the primary focus on age-appropriate training and programming needs to be on skill development in skating, puck control, passing, receiving and shooting. Concepts like offside, icing, positional play and face-offs can be introduced at a later age when players move to the full-ice model in the transition to U11 hockey.

## 3. Are teams permitted to identify a full-time goaltender?

All players should have an opportunity to play goal in full goalie equipment. Players should rotate through the position throughout the season. The Hockey Canada Long-Term Player Development Model encourages a wide range of skill development at a young age, and focusing on a single position may limit the opportunity to practice skills in all areas.

## 4. Are half-ice games required to be two 25-minute halves?

This is only a recommended timeframe. The game time established for the U9 Game Play Model is based on a 60-minute ice session, which can be shorter or longer. If this is the case, adjust the ice session accordingly, ensuring there is time for a short warm-up, two halves of play and a short break between the two halves to make any adjustments that need to take place.

## 5. Is the length of a shift limited to 60 seconds?

The shift length of 60 seconds is a recommendation. Shifts may be up to a maximum of two minutes. This is at the discretion of the Member. It is important to reference the core requirements of the game to ensure the spirit of the game is maintained.

## 6. Are U9 teams permitted to play full-ice games?

Hockey Canada policy permits the transition to full-ice game play January 15 or later for U9 players (see Playing Surface, Section 4).

## 7. What is the difference between a jamboree and a tournament?

A jamboree is designed to engage players in a fun environment; players come together and are placed onto teams. Games may or may not be competitive and the emphasis is on fun and fair play. A tournament is a schedule of games played among three or more teams, which follows a set schedule and leads to a winner.

## 8. Are smaller nets required?

There is no requirement to use smaller nets for U9 games. With goaltenders in full equipment, regular nets (4x6) are acceptable; however, smaller nets (2x3, 3x4) are also suitable options.

## 9. Is there a need to draw the crease for the nets?

No. Each net should be placed just inside the centre-ice circle, which will provide a small marking to aid the goaltender in positioning themselves. If there is no circle, a crease may be drawn on the ice.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## 10. What are the advantages of practicing in small areas and playing half-ice games?

Small spaces mean more engagement in the play and more activity. Through small-area, station-based practices and half-ice games, players are closer to the play at all times and have more opportunity for puck touches. Regardless of the skill level or the ability of each player, opportunities to be engaged in the play are doubled when the playing area is smaller. NHL research has illustrated that all skill areas of the game increased substantially when players played in small spaces more suited to their age and skill level.

## 11. What are the dimensions of a half-ice hockey game?

The average dimensions of a regular ice surface in Canada are 200 feet by 85 feet, with some 200 feet by 100 feet. The half-ice surface can be a maximum of 100 feet by 85 feet if the dividers are placed at the centre line.

## 12. Is it a requirement to use a blue puck instead of a black puck, and what are the advantages?

No. The regulation black puck weighs six ounces, while the blue puck weighs four ounces. Scaling down all aspects of practice and game play for U9 players is very beneficial. The blue puck is an appropriate weight in relation to the height and weight of young players. Use of the blue puck can promote proper mechanics in shooting, passing and carrying the puck.

## 13. Should U9 hockey be tiered?

Grouping of players of similar ability can set young players up for success and enjoyment. The focus of the U9 Game Play 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 whenever possible. It is recommended that prior to

the start of half-ice games, coaches may wish to discuss possible line combinations to ensure the skill level of the players on the ice is similar; this will allow more puck touches and fun for all players.

## 14. Do the officials need to be fully registered?

This is at the discretion of the Member. The U9 Game Play Model provides an excellent opportunity to introduce officials to the game.

## 15. If you choose to use registered officials, do the officials have to wear the full officiating uniform?

If the Member elects to have officials work the games, all officials need to wear the minimum of an officiating jersey with Member crest, black pants and a black CSA-approved helmet with a CSA-approved half visor.

## 16. If you choose to use registered officials, do the on-ice officiating shadows/mentors have to wear an officiating uniform?

No. In situations where an on-ice shadow/mentor is supporting the official, it is appropriate for them to wear a Member tracksuit. They still must wear a black CSA-approved helmet with CSA-approved half visor.

## 17. How does the official or coach keep game flow and not lose time on shifts when a puck goes out of play?

Officials are encouraged to keep additional pucks in their pocket in the event a puck is shot out of play. The official will simply provide a new puck to the non-offending team and play will resume.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## 18. What support is available for coaches?

The NCCP Coach 1 – Intro to Coach clinic is designed for U9 coaches who need to understand the proper instructional approach with under-9 players. The Community Coach Stream clinic is part of the new NCCP Coaching Clinic available through the online Hockey University.

Recognizing the need to provide a positive experience for young hockey players, the Coach 1 clinic builds upon a number of values, which include:

- Providing a safe environment for the introduction of fundamental skills.
- Developing an understanding of basic teamwork through structured activities and game-like situations.
- Introducing participants to fair and cooperative play.
- Refining basic motor patterns and building self-confidence.
- Providing an environment that challenges individuals positively and rewards the participants.
- Providing opportunities to build a lifestyle of fitness and activity.

In addition to coach education, the Hockey Canada Skills Manuals are a set of ice-session plans that are designed for the age-appropriate and skill-specific needs of U9 players. These plans are available through the **Hockey Canada Network, Drill Hub** and at **HockeyCanada.ca**.

## 19. What guidelines should be followed when storing and setting up equipment at community arenas?

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

It will be important to work with facility management to ensure 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 hockey association.

## 20. Where can portable boards or foam barriers be purchased?

There are a number of suppliers for portable boards, foam barriers and small nets. It is advisable to check local sources to ensure best pricing on the shipping of products.

On a national level, two suppliers handle large-volume orders for these products:

OmniSport Inc.  
14 Boulder Blvd.  
Stony Plain, AB T7Z 1V7  
780-968-2344  
**omnisport.ca**

Athletica Sport Systems Inc.  
554 Parkside Drive  
Waterloo, ON N2L 5Z4  
519-747-1856 / 877-778-5911  
**athletica.com**



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