



HOCKEY MANITOBA INITIATION PROGRAM

MHA RESOURCE GUIDE: Optimal organization of your Initiation Program

It is an exciting time for players of all ages to participate in the greatest game in the world! What follows is information pertinent to the entry level of hockey, Initiation Program, for all players aged 5-6 year olds. Included is information on organizing and coordinating the Initiation Program such as examples of program outlines, resources to run effective programs, examples of ice station breakdowns and helpful online links to drills and the Initiation skills manual.

As of the 2015-16 season, Hockey Manitoba adopted a new cross-ice structure for the Initiation category, which has been implemented for the benefit of all players to be delivered by all Minor Hockey Associations in Manitoba. This Initiation Program structure was developed using a combination of Hockey Canada Initiation guidelines and Long-Term Player Development principles designed to reflect Hockey Manitoba's player-first approach to development.

Philosophy and Objectives

1. Create a safe and fun environment for players to experience the sport.
2. Heavily incorporate physical literacy, fair play, cooperation and FUN into the sport.
3. Teach basic hockey skills so players can enjoy the sport.

The levels of enjoyment and development progression achieved by the players measure the success of an Initiation Program. To optimize those goals it is necessary to have a dedicated team of adults who will play a large role as effective leaders, organizers, and teachers.

Player environment must include:

- Fun
- Enjoyment
- Safety
- Challenges
- Motivation
- Interaction
- Patience



What the Initiation Program is:

The Initiation Program falls under the Fundamentals stage of the Hockey Canada Long-Term Player Development Model. It is a program designed for children ages 6 and under and factors in age appropriate growth and skill development principles. The purpose of the program is to focus on developing and mastering physical literacy while teaching the basics of skating and skills. The program will provide young hockey players with the opportunity to develop their skills in a positive, fun environment lead by qualified mentors/coaches. The program will consist of structured drills that will introduce basic hockey skills and progressively work towards slightly more advanced skills all within a cross-ice format. The skills learned from these drills will then be implemented into game like scenarios where the players will have the opportunity to play in a semi-competitive environment ensuring that we allow time for kids to just play.

Cross-Ice Format:

The Hockey Manitoba Initiation Program requires a method referred to as “cross-ice layout”. Cross-ice layout consists of dividing the ice surface into one-third lateral sections for games and drill stations instead of using the entire ice surface or half ice. The rationale behind this method is simple but powerful; alike other sports, long-term hockey development research has shown that reducing the size of the playing surface offers more opportunity for skill development and greater participation from all players. This leads to more interaction developing important skill intangibles leading to the building blocks of greater hockey sense and playing ability as growth and development progresses. Further, the format results in more puck touches, more passes, more shots, and more fun which keeps kids interested in the sport while providing a better avenue for advanced players who may one day pursue elite hockey. For children aged 5-8, cross-ice format is the most relastic simulation of the elite game, thus why it is so important we put our players in the best opportunity to reach their potential while having fun.

Cross-ice increases:

- Puck touches
- Passing attempts
- Passing receivals
- Shot attempts
- Puck battles
- Changes of direction

Better foundation for advanced skills:

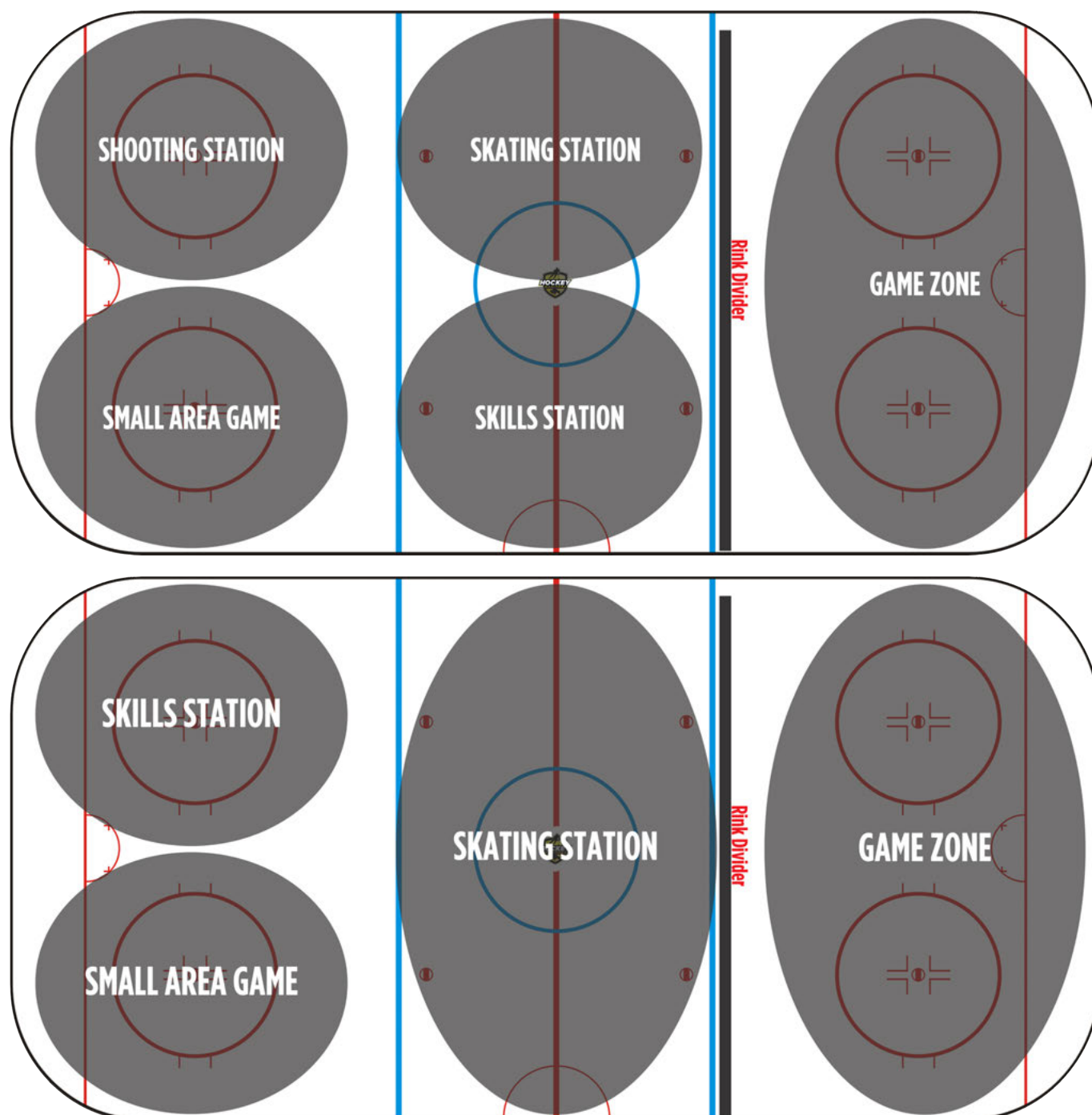
- Well-rounded, overall skating ability
- Significant for transition skating skills
- Decisions and playmaking
- Quicker reactions within high pace
- Finding open spaces
- Reading pressure and defenders
- Offensive and defensive body positioning

Cross-ice ice delivery is required throughout the enitre Initiation season in Manitoba and is even strongly recommended as a phase within the early portion of the Novice (7/8) hockey season.

Cross-Ice Layout:

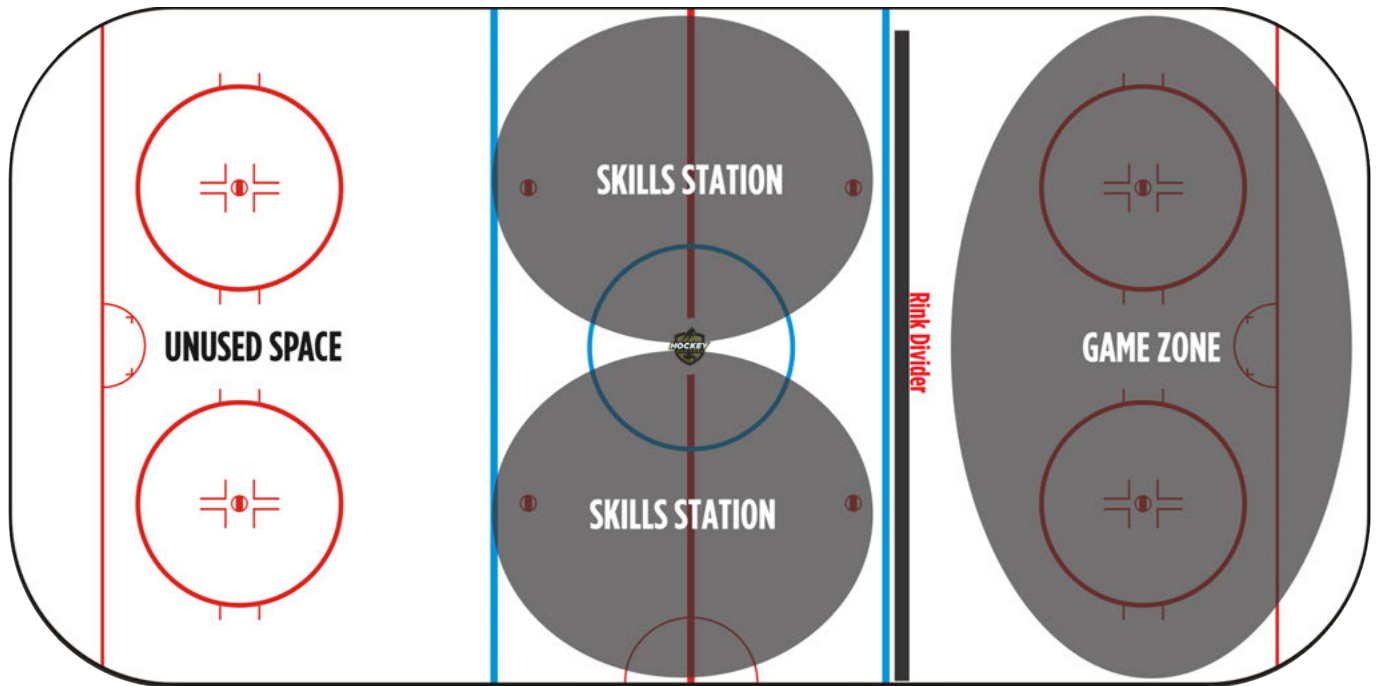
Based on common and recommended numbers of player participation each ice session here are several examples of organizing your cross-ice layout:

General sessions/practices:

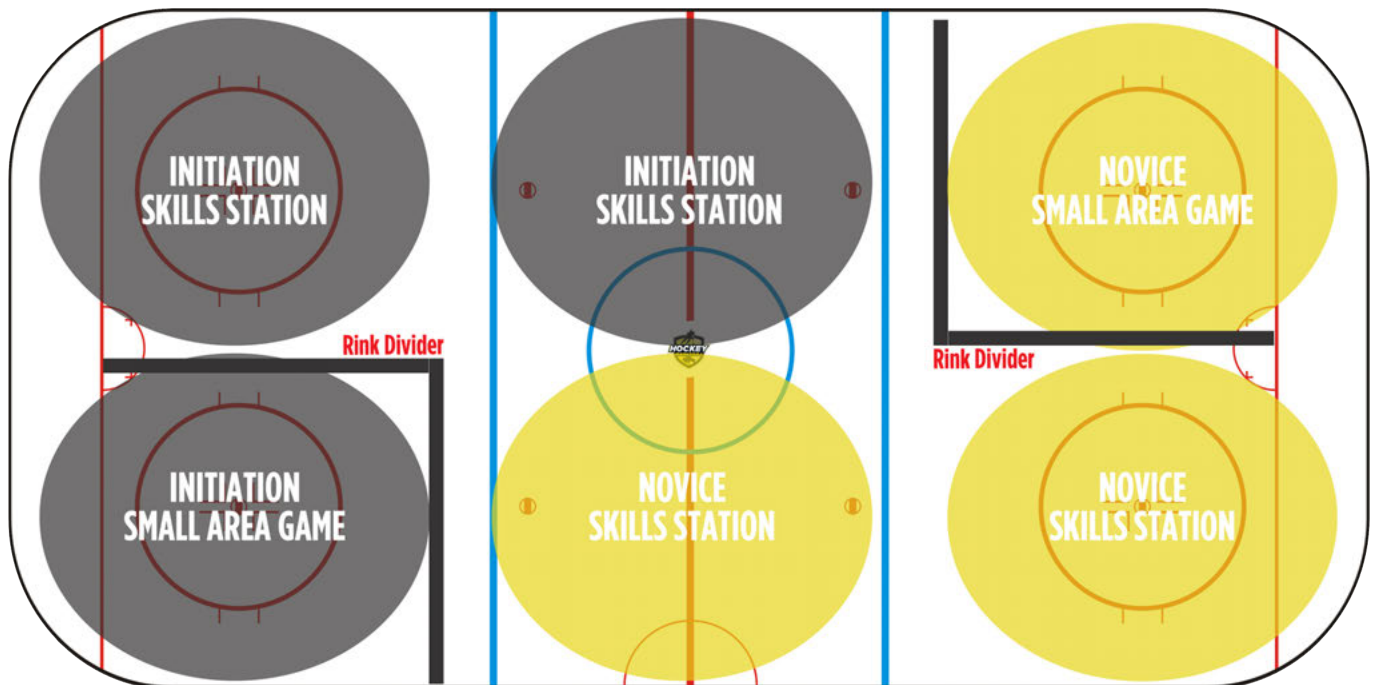


General sessions/practices continued:

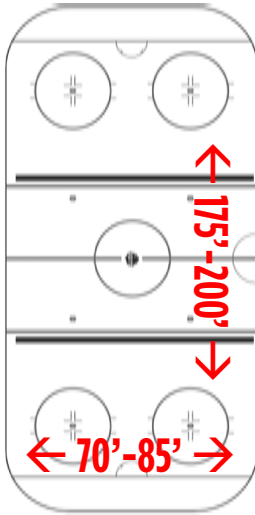
If you are a small association that will only have 1 team or 15-20 players, the layout does not change, just that less ice is generally used during the session:



QUICK TIP; in a small association you can book both Initiation and Novice programs together to maximize ice usage and share practice ice costs.



Cross-Ice Layout:



When creating cross-ice zones placing dividers just inside the blue lines are good visual guides to making 3 cross sections with similar dimension sizes. These sizes will slightly vary by facility.

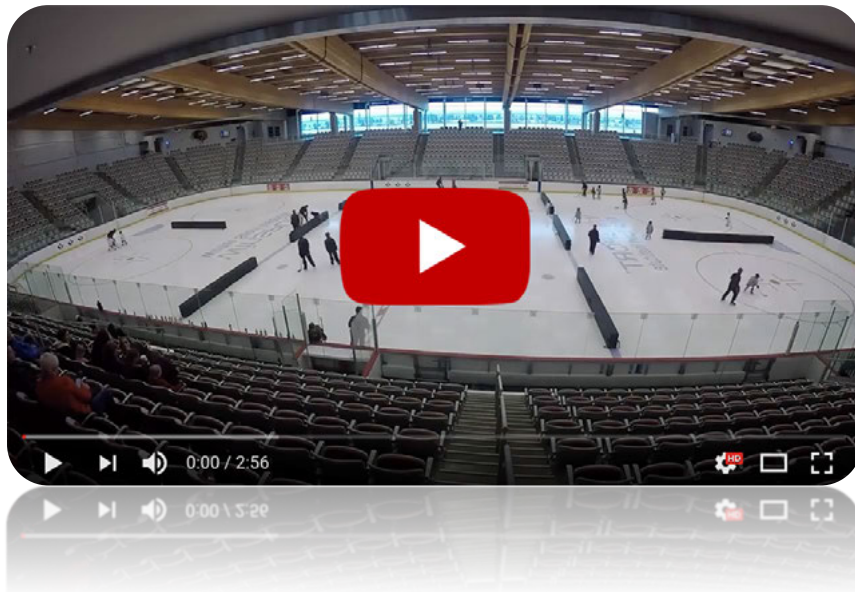
Whether your home rink is standard NHL size **85'x200'** or a smaller old-style size surface **70'x175'**, creating cross-ice zones remains the same in simply making 3 similar sized zones. Smaller old-style surfaces continue to enhance all the benefits promoted for cross-ice player development.

Rink dividers are a major asset for Initiation Program delivery but if your facility or association does not own dividers the lines can be patrolled by coaches or other safe homemade dividers.



The Initiation manual provides numerous layout ideas for skill stations and cross-ice zones. Every coach who attends a Hockey Manitoba certification clinic receives a Hockey Canada Skills Manual specific to the age they are coaching. These manuals are also available for purchase through the Hockey Manitoba office or within the Hockey Canada Network App.

To view a quick time-lapse video of the various ice layouts seen in the Hockey Canada Initiation Skills Manual click here: www.youtube.com/hockeymanitoba



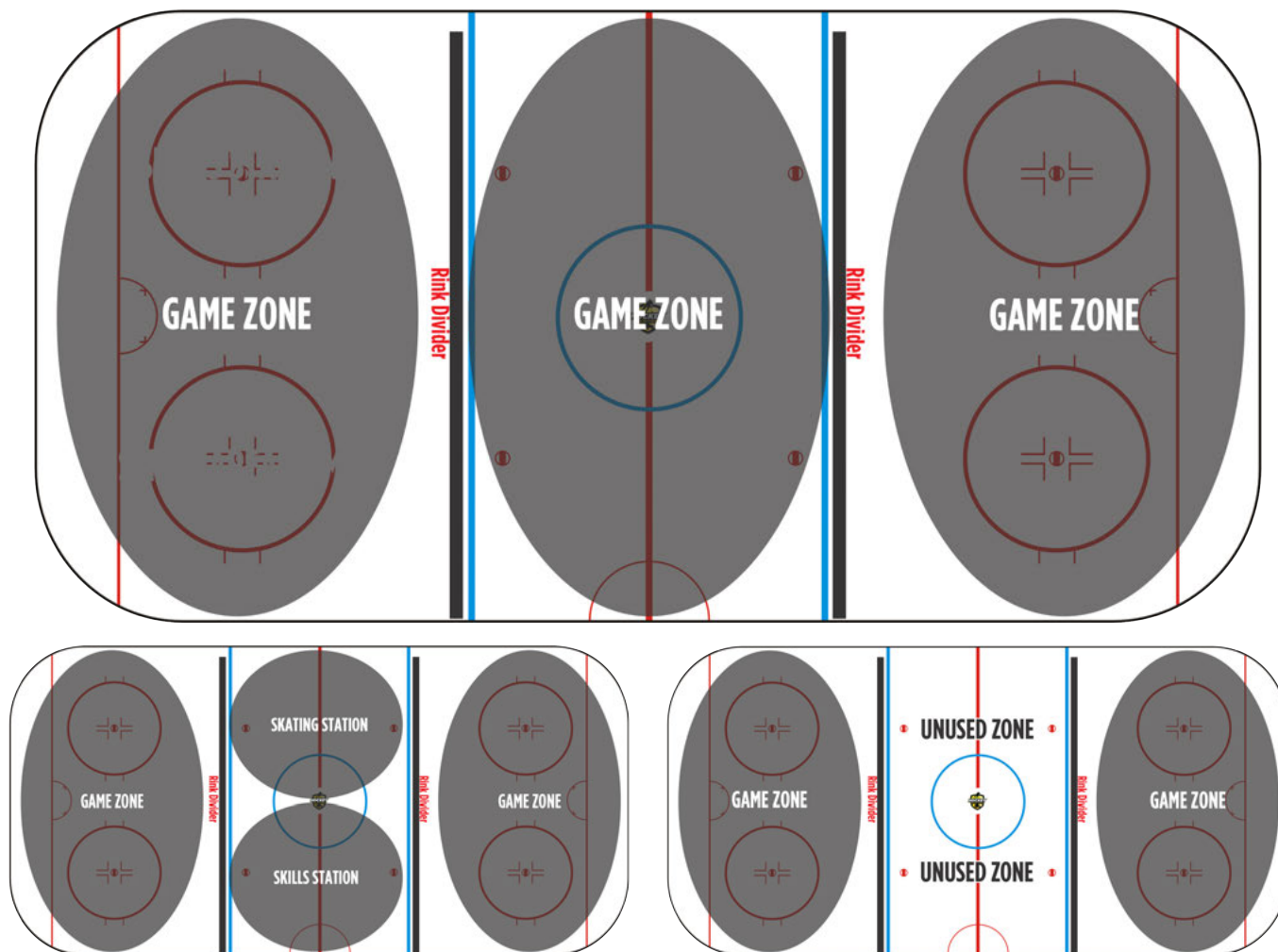
Cross-Ice Layout:

Games/Tournament Layouts:

Ideally 3 teams should be booked each game session, allowing for each team to split into 3 sub-groups "A" "B" "C". Each game zone will have 3 sub-groups, 2-minute shift rotation, 2 sub-groups play at once allowing the 3rd sub-group a break by simply sitting on the dividers (no benches necessary). Having 3 sub-groups allows for optimal parity amongst young players.

Common overall team size will allow for appx. 3-5 players per sub-group, head coaches simply discuss and divide their teams into the same or similar amount for each sub-group "A" "B" "C", depending on team numbers not all game zones may necessarily have the same competition format such as 5-on-5, 4-on-4, 3-on-3. It is also fine to let game zones run at 5-on-4 or 4-on-3. We do not want players sitting out any longer than their standard break in the 2-minute shift rotation. No goalies.

Associations and coaches can plan to have a skills zone during game sessions to continue to enhance development. In the event there's only enough players for two game zones then ice remains as cross-ice and is **not** divided into half-ice.



Initiation Seasonal Structure:

Each association has differing amounts of total players registered each season, however there are key structures and objectives that remain the same regardless if an association is large or small. No matter what size of the association, the priority volunteers and coaches should be optimal player development and enjoyment.

Here are the key points of an Initiation Seasonal Structure:

INITIATION (6-UNDER) IDEAL SEASONAL STRUCTURE:

SEASON START
OCTOBER (OR MID-SEPTEMBER)
FUN KICK-OFF NIGHT, "DRAFT PARTY"

PRACTICES
35 - 40 TOTAL, APPX. 45-60 MINS EACH
SKILL STATIONS, SMALL AREA GAMES
5:1 PLAYER/COACH RATIO

DEVELOPMENT SEASON
12 WEEKS, 24 PRACTICES
0 FORMAL GAME DAYS

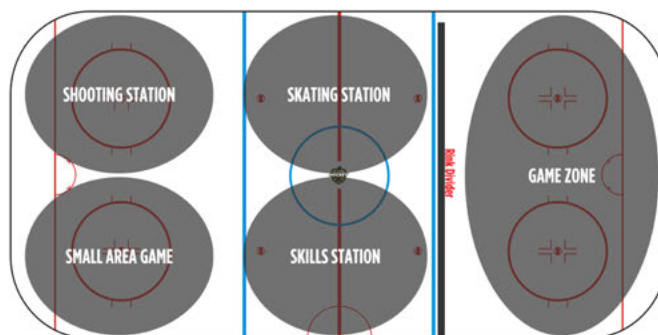
GAMES START
MID-DECEMBER
CROSS-ICE (NOT HALF OR FULL ICE)

REGULAR SEASON
14 WEEKS, 20 ICE SESSIONS
2/3 SKILLS ZONES, 1/3 GAME ZONE

TOURNAMENTS
3 FESTIVALS/JAMBOREES
12 CROSS-ICE GAMES

TOTAL GAMES
15 - 25 CROSS-ICE GAME SESSIONS
NO COMPETITIVE STANDINGS OR PLAYOFFS

LTPD STAGE: FUNDAMENTALS



- SMALL ROSTER SIZES, NO GOALIES
- 3-6 TEAMS EACH ICE SESSION
- WORK AS COACH GROUPS
- WELL ORGANIZED STATIONS
- 90% SKILLS, 10% INDIVIDUAL TACTICS
- SKATING FUNDAMENTALS
- AGILITY, BALANCE, COORDINATION
- INTERACTIVE OFF-ICE ACTIVITIES
- **POSITIVE & FUN**



Seasonal structure guidelines for all age groups of minor hockey are provided in the "Made In Manitoba" Player Development Model, distributed at various events or download it online anytime at www.hockeymanitoba.ca/development-model

Initiation Seasonal Structure Example:

St. Vital Minor Hockey Association

Initiation Program (140 players)

Thank you to Director of Development Clifton Dorge and St. Vital Minor Hockey in Winnipeg for this example of a season plan. There are approximately 140 players in this association. This provides a good example of how to run a large number of players through a season using a third party running their sessions and mentoring their coaches.



September to end of October - IP Sessions

Purpose

- Provide our players the skills needed to succeed. Sessions are designed to cater to the group's skill level and area of training required by that group.

Outline

- Minimum 1x 1 hour skate per week
- 36 kids/hour
- Each hour grouping formed according to player's skill. (move players between skill groups as required)
- IP sessions run by Evolution Hockey (EH).

EH will:

- Create the practice plan.
 - Run the session.
 - Work with coaches in a mentorship role.
 - Provide coaches skills required to teach the players the proper skills.
- Session Layout
 - Group warm-up full ice skating, edge work, balance, agility.
 - Skill development using stations, small area games and skills areas. Players divided into matching skilled groups (number of groups determined by number of stations) and rotated through the stations.
 - Finish session with, ½ cross-ice, fun and competitive games.

St. Vital continued:

November 1st to December 1st - Team Development Sessions

Purpose

- Continue the player skill development while players and coaches are with their team. This allows the players and coaches to get to know each other and learn each other's skill level.

Outline

- 3 teams/hour
- 40 minutes skill session followed by 20 minute 3 - ½ cross-ice games.
- During the 40 minute skill session stations in the same format as used in IP skates but keeping players in teams splitting them up into experienced and none experienced line per team.
- Use final 20 minute doing 3 - ½ cross-ice game.

December 1st to End of Season (League Play)

- 3 teams/hour rotating.
- Teams play 2 - 21 minute games and 1 - 21 minute skill session. (no floods between Games)
- 3 minute shifts. A line B line principle.
- Teams rotate through, playing a game against both teams and completing ⅓ ice skill session by themselves.
- 40 minute game time, 20 minutes skills on the remaining ice.

Initiation Seasonal Structure Example:

Deloraine Minor Hockey Association

Initiation Program (21 players)

Thank you to Initiation Program Coordinator Brad Vandenberghe and Deloraine Minor Hockey for this example which includes the focuses, coaching philosophy, and practice plan design of their program. This example is a great tool to reference for running a smaller scale Initiation Program.



Focuses:

Fun

- Kids need to enjoy themselves on the ice, building to a love of the game to keep kids involved

Improvement

- The idea is for all kids to improve throughout the year. Practice time allows for this to happen.

Skill Development

- Provide leveled skill development stations so that all kids can find success and improve

Game Play

- Less focused at this level, half ice idea allows more puck touches, shrinks area allows for stronger players to be challenged in smaller space and weaker players to have more opportunity to be involved. The possibility of splitting teams during games into skill levels exists, so that it provides more opportunities for all players.

Coach Philosophy

As Coaches (as Directed by Hockey Manitoba and Hockey Canada) we believe that initiation hockey is to be more of a practice based program rather than a game based one. The focus will be on skill development and improvement for **all** players. It may seem wrong now but in future your child will benefit from this process and become a better player. No matter the level of hockey someone plays, it is the basic skills (Skating, Puck Handling) that are needed. The development and the improvement of these skills **will** make them a better player. Having fun and developing a love for the game is another factor that is extremely important. We will keep practices as entertaining as possible with fun games always being incorporated. As for actual games, they will not be won by goals but by the number of smiling faces we see!

Deloraine continued:

Practice / Game Ratio

We will try and have at least 4 practices per 1 game throughout the year so...

Season = Approx. 20 Weeks @ 2 practices / week = 40 practices @ 4:1 = 10 games

Reasoning: Research show that all players are not involved in a game of hockey, often stronger players control the game leaving the weaker players chasing rather than being involved.

Practice provides same opportunities for all. More involvement = More improvement.

Burn out factor: Players begin to burn out playing too many games for reasons listed above.

Often see the players not wanting to play towards to end of the year due to this. The idea is to build a love for the game so that players continue to play, not over play and drive them away.

We will start to play games around mid-December and shoot for 1 game each weekend until the end of February. We are going to participate in 3 tournaments which will push our game number up, but we will play no more than 15 games this year.

Practice Structure:

We try to run practices that include, whole group instruction, small group stations. Each practice always has fun games incorporated.

10 min. – Whole Group Skating Focus / Warm-up

- We usually begin the practice with a whole group instruction on usually a skating technique, one coach instructs and others move around checking/correcting player's form and execution.

5 min. – Fun Game

- We then move into a whole group fun game and try to gear it towards the skating focus taught above.

25 min. – Stations (8 min per station)

- Often we run 3 stations with each station focusing on a different element. Usually skating, puck handling and a fun station. This structure of what is in each station depends on the time of the year and focus of the practice. Also areas of weakness are also focused on more heavily at times. Example: 2 skating stations and Fun game if skating is weak. At least one of the stations is a fun zone with a simple yet entertaining game for them to break up the rotation. Usually we have groups of 3-4 kids usually grouped by skill level.

5 min. – Fun Game

- Practice is always concluded with another whole group fun game.

Deloraine continued:

Game Structure:

We mostly play games 5 on 5 with 1 player in goal with no equipment. Play for 2 min shifts then rotate kids around. No positions are mentioned or stressed, kids just play. Later in the year the concept of passing enters and we challenge players to try and complete a pass before they score. This introduces the team concept of the game. Of course, this is all dependent of skill level and opposition skill level.

Depending on team numbers we have split and played 3 vs 3 or 4 vs 4 out of 2 ends of the rink. Often we communicate with opposition coaches to match skill level kids to create challenges and successes for all players.

Game duration is usually 2, 26 min periods with a 10-15 min break/warm-up time in between. Games generally can be fit into an hour of ice time.

Initiation Program Resources:

The use of equipment such as rink dividers and mini-nets are a great way to enhance your Initiation Program. The rink dividers are a great tool to use for organization and identifying stations for drills and small area games. Mini-nets are easily maneuverable compared to regular sized nets, giving you the ability to layout your practice any way you want.

Visit www.hockeymanitoba.ca/players/ip-program/equipment where there is information on different equipment you can access specifically for the Initiation Program.

Hockey Manitoba is pleased to promote a partnership with Athletica Sport Systems providing Associations with special deals in purchasing rink dividers and mini mite nets:

Athletica Sport Systems

Paula Sealey - Arena Services
Toll-Free 877-778-5911 ext. 234
psealey@Athletica.com



Border Patrol Rink Divider Set

- Eight (8) dividers, each 12" x 8" x 127.5", 85' in total (box style, UV outdoor vinyl)
- Includes two (2) ad windows (10" x 110") for MHA or sponsors logos
- Includes four (4) Hockey Manitoba logos - one on four (4) separate dividers

Mini Mite Net

- 36" by 24" size goal net includes top shelf, diagonal support bar and skirting
- 100% galvanized steel goal frame, post & crossbar 1-3/8" steel, .065 wall thickness



Blue pucks are also highly recommended for Initiation and Novice development. Visit Pro Hockey Life in-store or online for purchasing lightweight blue pucks.

www.prohockeylife.com

Hockey Is Fun:

Traditional routines of organizing and delivering hockey often lead to a system that significantly lacks inspiration and creativity. Having players truly fall in love with our game early on as young children isn't all about the on ice delivery. There many little details that associations and teams can coordinate throughout a season to foster more inspiration, motivation, and ultimately more enjoyment for young children.

An emphasis on physical literacy must be included not only on the ice but can often be easily incorporated off the ice with some fun activities. In doing we provide a great method for athlete development while associating more fun with our game and the association.

Ideas to consider:

Logos & Branding

- Create a hockey identity for your association for entry-level players, make it special, unique, and age-appropriate. Keep your main association name/logo incorporated but appeal to the 5-6 year old. Fun cartoon, mascot-based logos mixed with your primary association logo will inspire!
- Special jerseys for entry-level players with a special kids logo will help provide a strong connection and retention for young kids. Another affordable option is to include t-shirts or another apparel item within seasonal fees to promote your association and of course hockey.



Fun Gatherings

- Kick-off each season with a casual community gathering for your association players such as a fun outdoor BBQ theme, and include fun activities such as inflatable bouncers, face-painting, mascots, relay races, mini sport challenges, music, and more.
- This is a great method to attract a community sponsor into your season but more so the opportunity to directly have the MHA host a fun activity and introduce themselves to their members for the upcoming season.

Team "Draft" Party

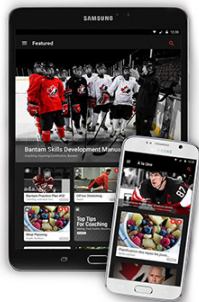
- Prior to the first ice session, rather than just providing an email to your group of players, host a fun gathering with a "draft" theme where your players are called up in a casual ceremony to receive their jersey and shake the "commissioner" or coaches hand.
- Schedule such an event directly into your Initiation program schedule and ensure it's booked prior to registration. Perhaps 1 week before actual ice time begins, this can be held at the same time frame your ice time would normally run. Affordable options to budget into the event can be pancake breakfasts, hot dogs, and some ball hockey and fun dryland games as a team/group. This is a great mixer not only for kids but as well for coaches and parents.

Budgets always need to be considered but there are always many fun and creative ways to significantly enhance entry-level hockey programming that does not break the budget of an association or parent/guardian. As long as there's a willingness to enhance the season for young kids, then creativity and passion will flow in organizing such initiatives!

Helpful Links:

Electronic Resources:

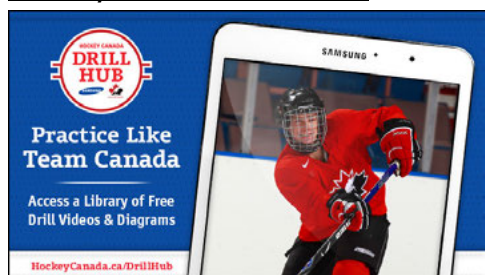
Hockey Canada Network App:



This resource has everything you need to know about hockey development from Initiation to Midget! Every skills manual is on this mobile app as well as access to all of Hockey Canada's drills and videos to help you plan your practices – free to download, purchase full app for only \$20 through a special Hockey Manitoba offer code "HMCERT2015". Only available through the app.

www.hockeymanitoba.ca/coaches/hockey-canada-network-app

Hockey Canada Drill Hub:



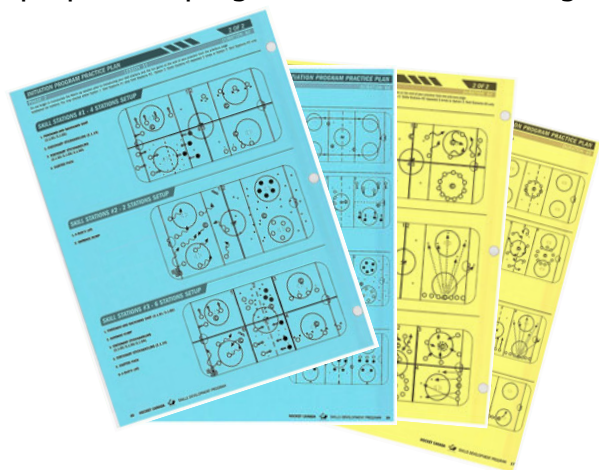
If you are looking for even more drills to help plan your practices this is a great online resource providing you with constantly updated content. This resource is free, mobile-responsive and available on desktop computers.

www.hockeycanada.ca/drillhub

Manuals:

Hockey Canada Skills Manuals:

Below are examples of practice plans from the Hockey Canada Initiation Skills Development Manual. The manual is very easy to follow and has practice sessions for an **entire** season with proper skill progression factored throughout the season.



Every coach who attends a Hockey Manitoba certification clinic receives a Hockey Canada Skills Manual specific to the age they are coaching. These manuals are also available for purchase through the Hockey Manitoba office or within the Hockey Canada Network App.

The manual provides a great resource for organizing your season on the ice not only with practice plans but as well as great check lists and teaching reminders.

Helpful Links:

Videos:



View a great player development presentation by Corey McNabb, Manager of Player Development with Hockey Canada. Hear important keys for implementing strong development principles within your association at all levels including your Initiation program.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-0hvcDK4PU



Watch an intriguing presentation covering key strategies for operating and coordinating Initiation hockey with fun and development as the priorities. John Luetkemeyer of Kirkwood Youth Hockey Association shares how his minor hockey association transformed to earn USA Hockey "Model Association" status.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qun_HqWMo3k

Coach Mentorship:

Hockey Manitoba and its 10 regional associations are currently establishing a coach mentorship program for Initiation hockey across the province. Framework was created in the summer of 2016 with most regions identifying a Regional Initiation Mentor to start the 2016-17 season. Regional Mentors have been a key piece of the 2016 Hockey Manitoba Faceoff Festival and will have contact with teams in their respective regions throughout the season. For more information about contacting your Regional Initiation Mentor or to get involved please contact your regional association.

Physical Literacy:

Visit www.fitkidshealthykids.ca to access an outstanding resource for incorporating physical literacy activities into your Initiation program. A great tool for associations, coaches, and parents alike.

