



Novice (7-8) Hockey Program Half-Ice Guidelines

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Introduction

Beginning in the 2017 – 2018 season, players in the Novice age category (7-8 yrs) will play on a modified ice surface –slightly over half the size of a normal hockey rink – until December 31st each season. This change falls in line with Long Term Player Development principles, the progression of our Initiation category and cross-ice initiative, and it is our hope that as players grow the rink size expands as they learn the basic skills and concepts of hockey.

Hockey in Canada is a passion. Simply put. Every person has a view and an opinion on our game. We all want our sons, daughters, grandkids and anyone playing hockey to enjoy the experience. Hockey Manitoba certainly respects that and shares in the sentiment. Our goal is to make the experience positive for all members in our organization. It is also our responsibility to stay current with any changes and improvements and bring those changes to our programs. We want our sport to stay on the front edge of change and a modified ice surface that is appropriate for young players is the right thing to introduce.

Hockey Canada is amongst the last organizations to look at ice modifications. With Sport Canada's focus on the long term development of athletes we have been exposed to the modification of many of the other major sports in Canada. Picture this: A 7 year old soccer player playing on a World Cup field. Or an 8 year old baseball player standing at home plate with a pitcher 60 feet, 6 inches away at Winnipeg Goldeyes Field. A basketball court with 10 foot baskets. A 7 year old on the goal line looking to the other end at Investor's Group Field. Putting our 7 and 8 year old players on an ice surface similar or equivalent to what players in the National Hockey League play on is a disadvantage to our athletes. It is our responsibility and our mandate to provide our athletes with a positive hockey experience. Developing skills, having success and fun as they grow in hockey is our main goal.

Hockey Manitoba is excited to be on the leading edge of this change! We believe these modifications will benefit every player as they grow in our game and we will do everything we can to support players, coaches and administrators with a well structured program. We ask everyone to approach this change with an open mind and support our direction in a positive manner to allow our players to learn the game in this exciting progressive direction.

The following information has been developed to assist our Minor Hockey Associations and Community Clubs in the implementation of half-ice hockey in the Novice age category. This will ensure a consistent, organized delivery model across the province, and hopefully addresses many of the questions or concerns that our membership may have expressed.

Motion

All exhibition, regular season and tournament games in the Novice age category must be played using half-ice sections until December 31st of each minor hockey season. Half-ice sections are considered to be from the centre red line* to the end boards in all arenas. Games will be played 5-on-5 and a goalie using full sized nets and regular black pucks. Beginning January 1st of each season, all exhibition, regular season and tournament games at Novice may be played on full-ice.

**Hockey Manitoba's Board of Directors has determined a slight modification, whereby the net will be placed on the centre red line, slightly increasing the playing surface of the half-ice section. Full details are outlined in subsequent sections of this document.*

Rationale

To continue positive changes implemented in the Initiation Program into the Novice Program with the long term player development model and philosophy as the fundamental basis for change. Players at the Novice level require a continued focus on physical literacy while also beginning to develop some of the more advanced individual skills inherent in the game. By moving from cross-ice at Initiation to half-ice at Novice, we increase the size of the ice surface in accordance with the increase in the size of player. This modified ice will continue to provide players with an environment that is more inclusive, competitive and conducive to skill development through puck touches and puck control, shots, passes completed, transitions, decision making, puck support, overall involvement...and FUN! In addition, with the creation of the new Development Zone, kids will have up to 40% more ice time during games!

Half-Ice Format - Summary

- Games will be completed within a one-hour or one-hour, 30 minute time slot with two competing teams.
- The ice surface will be separated into three zones: Half-ice Zone, Development Zone and Buffer Zone.
- Teams play ONE half-ice game in the Half-ice Zone.
- The space from the opposite blue line to the opposing end boards will be the Development Zone, used for small area cross-ice games, monitored by one on-ice coach from each team.
- The space between the Half-ice Zone and the Development Zone will act as a "Buffer Zone" to catch any pucks shot over the dividers in the half-ice game.
- Player benches for each team will be in use throughout the game.
- Players will rotate between zones as outlined in subsequent sections.
- One set of rink dividers is required in this format, however the use of two rink dividers is recommended if possible.

Scheduling

Minor Hockey Associations and leagues are strongly encouraged to schedule Novice half-ice games in succession whenever possible to allow for fluid transition between games. Ideally this group of Novice half-ice games would also follow a group of Initiation cross-ice games to limit the movement of rink dividers.

Practices

To maintain the concepts of long term player development and modified ice, practices at the Novice level should be on half-ice whenever possible. This allows for the focus to be on skill development and competitive games in small, modified spaces rather than full-ice flow drills or team tactics. In addition, this will save your team/association money!

Roster Size

Although Hockey Manitoba understands there are challenges in having consistent roster sizes across the branch, it is recommended that whenever possible team rosters should consist of 12-13 skaters plus one (1) rotating goalie. This provides the opportunity to increase ice time while utilizing the Development Zone and ensuring equal and adequate rest time for all players. However, this format will work for any size team! All skaters should be trying different positions as well.

Equipment & Set Up

Hockey Manitoba recommends that for the best possible results, two rink dividers are utilized in this format, as illustrated on page 5. However, only one rink divider is mandatory. Full sized nets must be used in the Half-ice Zone, however mini-nets are recommended in the Development Zone (pylons or additional full size nets can be used in the Development Zone if mini-nets are not available).

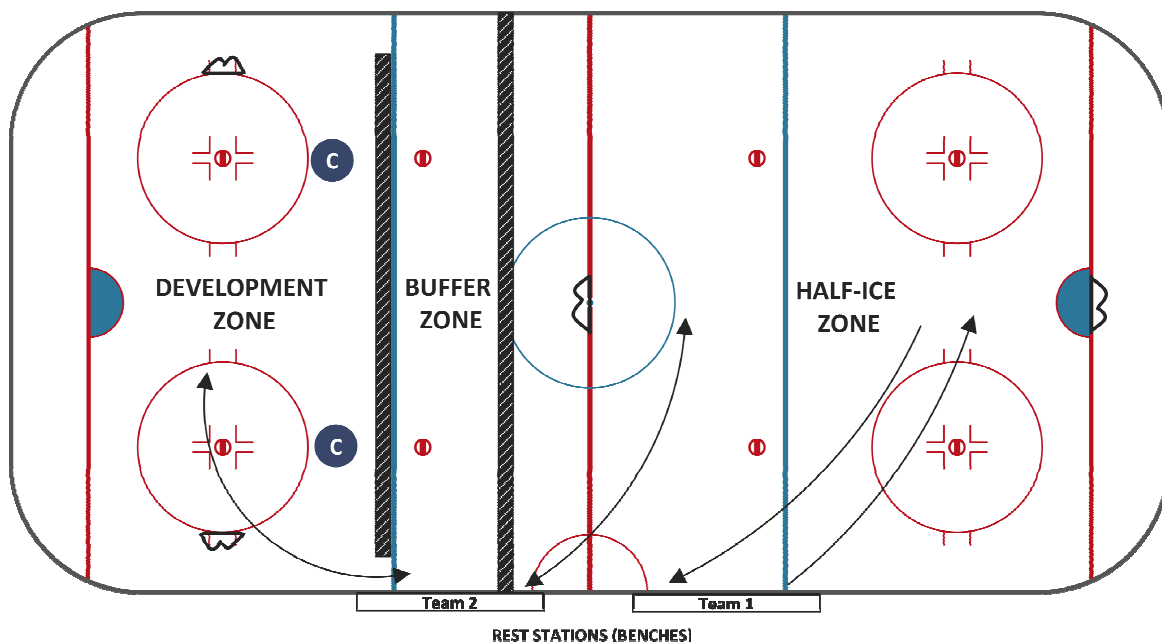
The two on-ice coaches are responsible for assisting facility staff in setting up the nets and rink dividers for each Novice half-ice game. In addition, they should assist in removing the rink dividers and the nets from the Development Zone immediately following the game. Trials have proven this only takes between approx. two (2) minutes before and after each game.

If there is another Novice half-ice game after their game, on-ice coaches should rotate and move the rink dividers into the middle section of the ice surface to allow for flooding around the boards, and then move them parallel to the boards so the remainder of the ice surface can be flooded. Each Association and/or Community Centre can determine the specific protocol in regards to the most efficient movement of equipment.

Ice Surface Layout

- In the Half-ice Zone, one net is to be placed on the goal line (using the crease and markings) and a second net is to be placed on the centre ice red line (goal posts closer to Development Zone side of ice), using the face-off dot as a guide for placement.
- In the Development Zone, two mini-nets should be placed on either side of the ice surface, approximately 4 feet from the boards. Alternatively, full sized nets or pylons can be used.
- One set of rink dividers (mandatory) must be placed across the entire width of the ice, approx. 10 feet behind the centre ice red line. The divider MUST NOT be placed past the top of the centre face-off circle. The intent is to have an equal space behind both nets. If divider is slightly longer than the width of the ice, simply turn in the section of the divider at each end slightly to create a "corner" effect.
- One set of rink dividers (recommended) can be placed inside the opposing blue line of the Half-ice Zone to create a Buffer Zone for pucks. A space should be left open between the dividers on the blue line and the side boards to allow for easier movement of players during rotations. This can be easily accomplished, if using the border patrol rink dividers, by simply removing one of the eight sections in each set and centering across the ice surface accordingly. This will leave approx. 3-4 feet of space on each side of the ice surface.

NOVICE HALF-ICE LAYOUT



Warm Up

A two-minute warm up will take place for teams prior to each game, and will begin once the ice surface has been set up for the half-ice game. Although set up for warm up will be the same, there will be two scenarios (outlined below), depending on the number of full sized nets in use.

SCENARIO 1 (2 full sized nets in use on ice)

- One team will warm up in the Half-ice Zone, the other in the Development Zone.
- Teams will warm up in the Zone closest to their respective bench.
- Nets will be placed in their standard positions at each end of the ice for the duration of the warm up.
- At the end of warm up, on-ice coaches will assist officials in moving the full sized net from the Development Zone to its proper position on the centre ice red line in preparation for the half-ice game. The mini nets or pylons to be used in the Development Zone can then be moved into their positions on the side board by the on-ice coaches.

SCENARIO 2 (4 full sized nets in use on ice)

- One team will warm up in the Half-ice Zone, the other in the Development Zone.
- Teams will warm up in the Zone closest to their respective bench.
- In the Development Zone, on-ice coaches will move one net to a standard placement on the goal line. The other net will be moved to a safe area within the Development Zone and not in use for the duration of the warm up.
- At the end of warm up, both nets in the Development Zone will be moved to their positions on the side boards by the on-ice coaches.

Half-Ice Zone (Game)

- The half-ice game will be played 5-on-5 (skaters) and one goalie from each team.
- Coaches from both teams should meet briefly before each game to ensure line-ups of approximate equal ability are developed and utilized for the duration of the game.
- Game length will be 2 x 18-minute stop time periods for one hour ice slots. Game length will be 2 x 24-minute stop time periods for one and a half hour times slots. Teams switch ends after 1st period.
- The team who's bench is closest to the Development Zone defends the net on the centre red line in the 1st period.
- Shifts will be 2 minutes in length, with shift changes identified by a buzzer. The clock is stopped at the end of each shift. Changing on "the fly" is prohibited.
- Shifts will begin with a face-off taking place at one of the 4 available face-off dots in the Half-ice Zone. Face-offs at the beginning of each shift and after goals will rotate between the available face-off dots (as determined by the officials) to provide players with a variety of different face-off setups.
- Face-off locations within each shift for stoppages in play (after penalty, goalie covers puck, puck shot out of play, etc.) will be at the closest face-off dot to the play, as determined by the officials.
- There are NO icing or offside calls in the half-ice game.
- Any player called for a penalty will be taken off for the remainder of their shift (placed in the player's bench). The offending player's team will play the remainder of the shift shorthanded. Once their shift has ended the player will be deemed to have served their penalty and will proceed into their next Zone in the rotation.
- Score will be kept for the half-ice game (not in Development Zone), by the timekeeper using the main score clock. Goals and assists will be recorded as in standard game procedures (with game sheets).
- All players line up in the Half-ice Zone to shake hands immediately following the game.

Development Zone

The purpose of the Development Zone is to maximize ice usage, while providing additional ice time and development opportunities for players. On-ice coaches (1 from each team) will also be able to coach and encourage players, providing additional teaching and instructional opportunities. This Zone will be in use (mandatory) when teams have over 10 skaters, however its use is strongly encouraged even when teams have less than 10 players, as determined by coaches and outlined in subsequent sections.

For example, if a team has 12 skaters, with 5 playing the half-ice game and 5 on their bench, the additional 2 players will be able to participate in a small area game in the Development Zone rather than "sitting" for two consecutive shifts. More ice time, more development!

- The Development Zone will consist of a cross-ice section of the ice that extends from the end boards to the nearest blue line opposite that of the Half-ice Zone. A small area, cross-ice game will be played in the Development Zone, with mini-nets (recommended), full sized nets or pylons placed near each of the side boards.
- One coach from each team is required to be on the ice to oversee the Development Zone.
- On-ice coaches should also assist officials in moving the half-ice divider back into its proper position if moved significantly during the course of the half-ice game.
- There will be no goaltenders and no score will be kept in the Development Zone.
- There will be no face-offs, play will be continuous for the duration of the shift.
- The number of players in the Development Zone will vary, depending on each team's numbers.
- On-ice coaches are encouraged to incorporate rules for added development during the course of the game play in the Development Zone (i.e. make one or two passes, skate puck through gates (pylons), shoot backhanded, etc.).
- Nets can be placed differently (i.e. turned backwards, laid flat) during game play for a greater degree of difficulty.

Despite being from different "teams", on-ice coaches should work together to provide the most benefit for the players, while also learning from each other. Each team is encouraged to rotate coaches that will go on the ice from game to game.

Officials

The half-ice game will be run by two (2) officials who will be responsible for face-offs, goal determination, penalties, etc. while working on fundamentals such as skating, positioning and communication. This will assist young officials in building confidence and experience, reacting "with" the play rather than "to" it, while creating a foundation to take with them into full-ice games in January. Hockey Manitoba will include applicable officials' half-ice protocol at all Level 1 officiating clinics, and it will also be circulated to all Minor Hockey Associations. Officials will continue to learn about offside, icing and other full-ice rules at their clinics.

Based on Hockey Manitoba's trials of the program, our officials are extremely supportive of the half-ice concept.

Rotation of Players

A critical component to the success of the Novice half-ice structure is the organized rotation of players between shifts. Each coaching staff should have a full understanding of how players rotate within the zones throughout the course of the game to avoid delays. It is recommended coaching staff from each team briefly discuss number of players, etc. prior to each game to determine use of the Development Zone.

- At the beginning of each game/period coaches will assign 5 players for the half-ice game, 5 players on their bench and the remaining players in the Development Zone.
- At the end of each shift, players rotate as follows:
 - The 5 players on the bench move to half-ice game
 - The 5 players in half-ice game move to their bench*
 - Players in Development Zone move to their bench
- *At the end of each shift, coaches will identify which players moving to their bench from the half-ice game continue to the Development Zone for the next shift. The number of players that participate in the Development Zone during each shift will depend on the total number of players on each team. Coaches will ensure different players have the opportunity to remain in the Development Zone throughout the game. The half-ice game resumes once all players have moved into their new zones.
- This rotation will continue throughout the duration of the game, with coaches from each team ensuring equal amounts of rest and play for all of their players.
- Coaches should instruct players to calmly step over/around the Half-ice Zone rink divider when moving to and from the Development Zone. On-ice coaches should also assist in monitoring the safe and timely movement of players at all times. Trials indicate this actually runs quite well.
- Teams will often have a different number of players at each game (we'll use an example of one team with 11 skaters, and one team has 13 skaters). In this case, for the purpose of the Development Zone, simply have one player from the team with 3 skaters in the Development Zone join with the other team's player and compete 2 vs. 2. Remember, it's about competitive games and development in the Development Zone!
- As an alternative option, coaches could send an additional player(s) to the Development Zone to balance things out, just remember again that all the kids should get equal ice time and adequate rest.

Ice Time & Increased Development

With the creation of the Development Zone, skaters will receive additional ice time and skill development opportunities compared to a traditional full-ice game. For example, if we compare ice time of a team with 12 skaters in both scenarios for a game in a one-hour ice slot we see the following:

Traditional Format Each player receives 7-8 shifts and 14-16 minutes of total ice time

Half-ice Format Each player receives 7-8 shifts in the Half-ice Zone and 3-4 shifts in the Development Zone for a total of 20-22 minutes of total ice time.

That's 6 minutes of additional ice time per player, per game...**an increase of almost 40% of ice time and skill development!**

Growth & Development FAQs

Does my player regress by having to play half-ice again at 8 years old?

No, 8 year old players need to have this significant portion of the season played half-ice in order to continue to reach their hockey potential. All the benefits of development in half-ice hockey are very important for an 8 year old player.

Does my "advanced" player regress by having to play half-ice at 7 or 8 years old?

No, advanced players benefit even more by playing half-ice. All players benefit from increased puck touches, scoring chances, quick transitions, read & react situations, puck support, passing plays in half-ice hockey. However, research shows that advanced players benefit twice as much as the average player.

What about the offside and icings learned in the second half of the 7 year old season?

View the first half of both 7 and 8 year old seasons as the "accelerated development season" where players get to only worry about skills. Learning and mastering rules of the game are not important for a 7 or 8 year old player. Growth and development principles tell us that this age is very important to maximize their long-term development potential, so try not to focus on game rules during this part of the season. Although we all respect the rules of the game, these specific rules can be learned or remembered as the second half of the season progresses.

Some 8 year old players are very big; what about incidental contact and collisions?

Incidental contact and collisions will always be part of the game and are unavoidable anytime you have players around the puck, however the reduction in the playing area from full-ice to half-ice will force players to accelerate their thought process and reaction times. It should also be noted that Junior/NHL players, all of whom are much larger than Novice players, spend the majority of their time in either the defensive or offensive zones (smaller areas than that of our Half-ice Zone), so to think 7 & 8 year old player development is going to be stunted rather than accelerated by playing on a reduced ice surface is inaccurate.

With the reduction in ice surface, won't this have a negative impact on skating development?

Quite the opposite. Hockey is no longer a linear game and skating is much more than simply moving in a straight line. The reduction of the ice surface will again help to develop players' complete skating skills which include stops and starts, transitions, turning, pivots, agility, edge work and balance. Good skaters will always be good skaters but playing in a half-ice concept will assist in the development of every player's skating acumen rather than primarily relying or limiting their skating arsenal to full acceleration. In addition, a study conducted by Hockey Alberta found that young players can reach top speeds in a distance less than half of the ice, therefore we are confident that half-ice games will improve rather than handicap players' skating skills.

Won't there be increased whistles with the reduction of the ice surface, and pucks shot over the divider(s)?

With the removal of off-sides and icings, our research has shown that there is actually a decrease in stoppages of play. The result is more continuous, competitive play for all participants during every shift. Trials have shown that the amount of pucks shot over the divider(s) is very limited.

Rink Divider Purchase Information

With the implementation of cross-ice hockey at the Initiation age category, and now half-ice hockey at the Novice age category, rink dividers have become a key piece of equipment for all facilities. Hockey Manitoba facilitated a bulk, cost saving order option for all Regions & Associations in 2015-2016, and we will provide the same opportunity in the spring of 2017. Many Associations took advantage, and have their rink dividers in place, however for those interested, information on how to take advantage of this opportunity will be circulated to membership by April 15, 2017.

Hockey Manitoba strongly recommends that Border Patrol rink dividers are used, which can be purchased from Athletica Sport Systems. These dividers are extremely functional, durable and easy to move. In addition, each set includes two ad windows that can be used for local sponsors to reduce or even cover your costs! The most cost effective option is to purchase rink dividers through Hockey Manitoba's bulk order process coming soon, however should your Association or facility wish to order rink dividers now, the information is as follows:

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 - one ad window on two (2) separate dividers

Athletica Sport Systems, Paula Sealey - Arena Services

psealey@Athletica.com or 1-877-778-5911 ext. 234

Conclusion

Hockey Manitoba sincerely appreciates the efforts of our literally thousands of volunteers across the province who dedicate their valuable time to our great game. We understand that change can sometimes be difficult, however we are confident that these modifications will benefit all Novice players as they grow and develop.

This information has been created to assist all volunteers in the consistent delivery of the new Novice half-ice format, and ultimately ensure that we work together to provide a positive hockey experience for our players in a safe, sportsmanlike environment. Due to the detail in this document, it is not necessarily the intent for distribution to parents, etc.

However, Hockey Manitoba will be creating and circulating a variety of additional information over the coming weeks/months, including promotional materials, video, analytics etc. that will assist in the promotion and understanding of this progressive change for all members.