



Timbits Under-7 (U7) Motion & FAQ's

While many other sport organizations have modified their games to focus on guaranteeing that all young players are having fun and developing basic skills, hockey is one of the last sports to follow suit. It is important for the Long-Term Athlete Development Framework that our sport joins the motion of developing fundamental skills and physical literacy before gearing towards competition. It is important for the players to learn athleticism and sportsmanship before being rushed beyond their maturation and skill set. To embrace these concepts, Hockey Manitoba has moved forward with the following motion applicable to the Initiation Program (now Timbits Under-7) (passed during the 2015-16 season).

Motion

“All games and practices at the initiation level shall use modified ice surfaces consisting of cross-ice sections as of the 2015-16 season.”

Rationale for Change

Manitoba was ahead of the curve in implementing cross-ice hockey, doing so for the 2015-16 season. Nationwide, Hockey Canada mandated its adoption in the 2017-18 season. With its two-season head start, our Timbits Under-7 (U7) program has become the model by which other provinces follow, and it has allowed our instructors an additional two years of development and understanding.

Long term player development research shows us that reducing the size of the playing surface relative to the size of the player offers more opportunity for skill development and greater participation from all players. It leads to more opportunities to engage with the sport including: better decision making, quicker reaction time, finding open space (enhances skating ability), reading the play (helps with strategy and critical thinking), offensive / defensive body position, puck pressure, containment, etc. which all lead to an improved understanding of the game.

More puck touches, more passes, more shots, and more fun is the intention here – and young players will gain more confidence in their abilities both on and off the ice, leading to player retention.

Improved Physical Literacy + Improved Skills + Improved Decision Making + Improved Engagement = Development and Fun for All Players

Timbits U7 Program FAQ's

1) How does playing cross-ice benefit my child as opposed to full-ice format? What skills will be focused on by making the game surface smaller?

- Introducing a smaller game surface meets the needs of young players and increases the opportunity for all players to touch and handle the puck. By doing this we create a positive environment for learning the fundamental skills of hockey such as skating, puck handling, passing and shooting
- We scale the size of the ice down to the size of the player, leading to more puck contact resulting in improved puck skills and more shooting opportunities to enhance scoring skills
- A smaller playing surface increases the tempo of the game, forcing players to make quicker decisions and quicker reactions. This helps develop decision making and critical thinking skills both on and off the ice

2) Are cross-ice games played 5-on-5 or 3-on-3?

- Cross-ice games can be played in any variation of lines based on the modified space, number of participants, and the coach's discretion; teams can play 3-on-3, 4-on-4, 5-on-5, etc.
 - Ideally with such a small space, 3-on-3 is beneficial to allow for more puck contact for all players

3) Are time and scores recorded during cross-ice games?

- Score and game time, along with offsides and icings, will not be implemented during game play to focus on skill development rather than an emphasis on winning
- Timing for shifts and rotation through stations is tracked by the lead coach for the ice session and can be done either using a stopwatch or using the score clock

4) When are face-offs used during a cross ice game?

- Face-offs can be conducted in the middle of the modified ice surface at the start of each game

5) How long should timed shifts be?

- A timed shift is recommended to be no more than 2 minutes long from the opening shift faceoff to the end of the shift. At the end of each 2-minute interval, lines will be swapped out and play will begin again

6) Are penalties given? If so, who is officiating?

- Cross ice games will not have penalties, which is no different than previous years in U7
 - There are people on the ice monitoring game play, however they do not call penalties or keep stats

7) If there is no recorded game time, what is the structure of a cross-ice game and session?

- However, the Hockey Manitoba recommended structure ideally calls for 3 teams booked for each game session, allowing for each team to split into 3 subgroups “A” “B” “C”
 - Each game zone will have 3 sub-groups with a 2-minute shift rotation. 2 subgroups 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
- More info can be found here:
 - <http://www.hockeymanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Timbits-Under-7-Resource-Guide-2.pdf>

8) Are there different ways that the rink can be divided to create more efficient usage of the entire ice surface for both cross-ice games and skill development?

- The ice can be divided in numerous ways ranging from 3 game zones, to 6 skill zones, or a mixture of both skill and game zones. Please refer to the link below for examples:
 - <http://www.hockeymanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Timbits-Under-7-Resource-Guide-2.pdf>

9) Will my child’s team be opposing other teams or fellow teammates during cross-ice games?

- This is at the discretion of the minor hockey association however the recommended format is to have two teams participating in cross-ice games as opposed to inter-squad games
- Ideally 3 teams should be booked each game session, allowing for each team to split into 3 subgroups (“A”, “B”, and “C”) based on development / skill level

10) Will other hockey teams be sharing rented ice with my child’s team?

- This is dependent on the minor hockey association – however there could be up to 3-4 teams sharing a one-hour ice session to reduce ice costs per team in areas where ice is expensive or availability is limited

11) Our association cannot afford to buy equipment such as rink dividers, small nets, blue pucks, etc. – how can we implement the cross-ice games?

- For associations that cannot afford to purchase equipment, cross-ice games may be implemented using standard arena equipment and additional on-ice support. Please contact your Region head or Hockey Manitoba for more details

- All additional on-ice support must have completed the Respect In Sport coaching course and the required Hockey Canada coach training

12) We are interested in purchasing equipment for our cross-ice sessions, where is the best place to purchase what we need?

- Hockey Manitoba has a partnership with Athletica Sport Systems for the purchase of rink dividers and mini nets. Please contact your regional representative for more information on purchasing equipment with these promotions

13) How long is the Timbits Under-7 (U7) season?

- As per the Hockey Canada LTPD Plan, the ideal U7 season is 28-32 weeks, broken down into:
 - ~12 weeks of practice and skill development (24 practices)
 - ~14 weeks of practice and game play (15 -25 games starting mid-December)
 - ~4 weeks of tournaments (including Timbits U7 Face-Off Festival)

For more information on the Under-7 (U7) seasonal structure please refer to the Hockey Canada U7 downloads here: <https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/hockey-programs/coaching/under-7/associations/seasonal-structure>

14) Are tournaments required to adhere to the cross-ice games motion?

- Yes, all tournaments are required to follow cross-ice game layouts as provided by Hockey Manitoba.