



U9 (NOVICE) RESOURCE GUIDE

Updated – February 2020



Section 1: Intro to Hockey

The future of hockey lies with today's youth.

Because of this, Hockey Canada and Hockey Eastern Ontario have developed age appropriate programming to encourage the growth of foundational skills for young players in hockey. Minor hockey associations and coaches lead the implementation of the U9 program with the assistance of volunteers, parents and others associated with hockey. The programming must provide opportunities for a wide range of people to get involved to improve the quality of the hockey experience through sound instruction and enjoyable play.



How a player gets his/her initial taste of hockey is crucial. Their first years of hockey must be a positive experience full of fun and excitement. If the beginner has fun and develops some basic skills and builds confidence, there is a good chance they will go on to enjoy hockey for life.

In 1995, Hockey Canada passed a motion requiring the U7 be implemented by every Minor Hockey Association across the country and to change their constitution/bylaws to reflect the creation of a new division in hockey. The Hockey Canada U7 serves as a structured, learn to play hockey program designed to introduce players aged 5-8 to the game's basic skills in an atmosphere of fun and fair play.

Hockey Canada then took the next step, making it mandatory that all games are played on cross ice/half ice starting in the 2016-17 season for U7 participants, and in the 2019-20 season for U9 age category participants.

Effective for the 2019-20 season, U9 hockey in HEO will run as an Introduction to Hockey, being played on Half Ice. The goals and objectives of new format are to:

- Teach the basic skills of hockey so players can enjoy the game,
- Assist in the development and enhancement of physical literacy and basic motor patterns,
- Deliver a program that is age appropriate for the size, skill and age of the players,
- Encourage the aspects of fitness, fair play and co-operation while having fun playing the game.

A minor hockey association's programming at the **U9** level will serve as an important building block upon which the entire minor hockey association is built. Youngsters at every level of play benefit from getting the "right start" in the game.



U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



THEMES FOR THE NEW U9 FORMAT

Purpose: Give the game back to the kids

Outcome: Reach your Potential

Looks Like: Action and Activity

Feels Like: Energy and Excitement

Our goal is to create an Age appropriate program which will enact a cultural change for how players experience the game at the U9 level. This is real hockey even though it may not look like the way you played as parents.

HOCKEY LANDSCAPE

Four reasons parents are not enrolling their young kids in hockey:

- The **expense** of hockey
- The amount of **time** hockey consumes
- The lack of **enjoyment**
- The lack of a **safe** environment

DRAWBACKS IN OUR SYSTEM

- Over-competing & under training.
- Fundamental movement skills and sport skills are not taught properly.
- Preparation geared to short-term outcomes.
- Competition system interferes with athlete development.
- Early specialization is demanded.

It is okay for parents to want their kids to get to the highest levels, but they need to know the best way to go about it.

AGE APPROPRIATE

Definition: Designing hockey programming that is suitable to the age, size, and skill level of the participant.

- Children are not miniature adults
- Child development is a marathon not a sprint
- Children should be built into:

People First ➡ Athletes Second ➡ Hockey Players Last



U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



GROUPING OF PARTICIPANTS

Team Structure

Teams on a full sheet:

2 teams: 1 game with 2 teams and a practice; or two games (split-squads).

3 teams: 1 game with 2 teams and a practice with 1 team.

4 teams: 1 game with 2 teams and a practice with 2 teams; OR two games.

Tier	Age Group	Ice Utilization	Play
Tier 1	7/8	Half	Inter-District
Tier 2	7/8	Half	Intra-District or Inter-District House Leagues
Tier 3	7/8	Half	Intra-District or Inter-District House Leagues
Tier 4	7/8	Half	Intra-District or Inter-District House Leagues

PLAYING/PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT

Full Ice Practice: 2-4 teams on ice - Half Ice Practice: 1-2 teams on ice

	Rules (Required)	Options (Can Do)
Two Teams: 1 Game, 1 Practice	Tier 1: 18 on roster; 16 skaters, 2 goaltenders. Tiers 2-4: 9-13 on roster, rotate goalies. 1 official per game.	Tier 1: Assign or rotate goalies.
Two Teams: 2 Games (Split Squads)	Tier 1: 18 on roster; 16 skaters, 2 goaltenders Tiers 2-4: 17 on roster. 1 official per game.	Tier 1: Assign or rotate goalies. Tiers 2-4: Vary roster size.
Three Teams: 1 Game, 1 Practice	Tier 1: 18 on roster; 16 skaters, 2 goaltenders.	Tier 1: Assign or rotate goalies.

U9 RESOURCE GUIDE

	Tiers 2-4: 9-13 on roster, rotate goalies. 1 official per game.	Tiers 2-4: Vary roster size.
Four Teams: 1 Game, 1 Practice	Tier 1: 18 on roster; 16 skaters, 2 goaltenders. Tiers 2-4: 9-13 on roster, rotate goalies. 1 official per game.	Tier 1: Assign or rotate goalies. Tiers 2-4: Vary roster size.
Four Teams: 2 Games	Tier 1: 18 on roster; 16 skaters, 2 goaltenders. Tiers 2-4: 9-13 on roster, rotate goalies. 1 official per game.	Tier 1: Assign or rotate goalies. Tiers 2-4: Vary roster size.

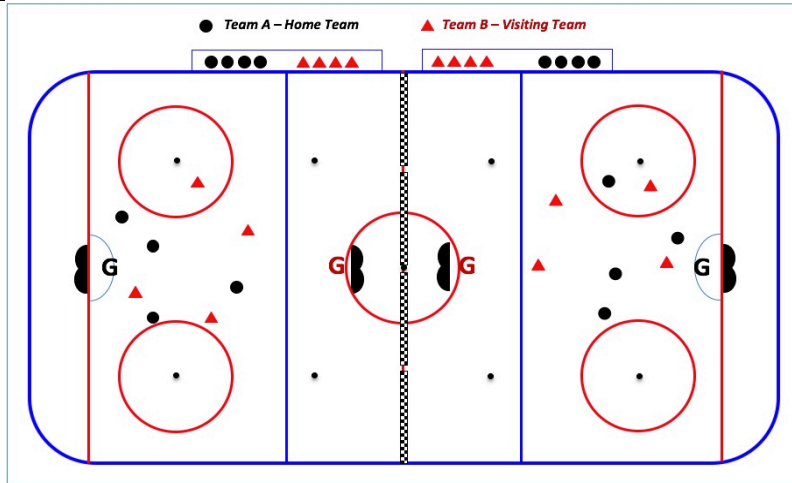


Figure 1: Two Team – Two Half Ice Game Model

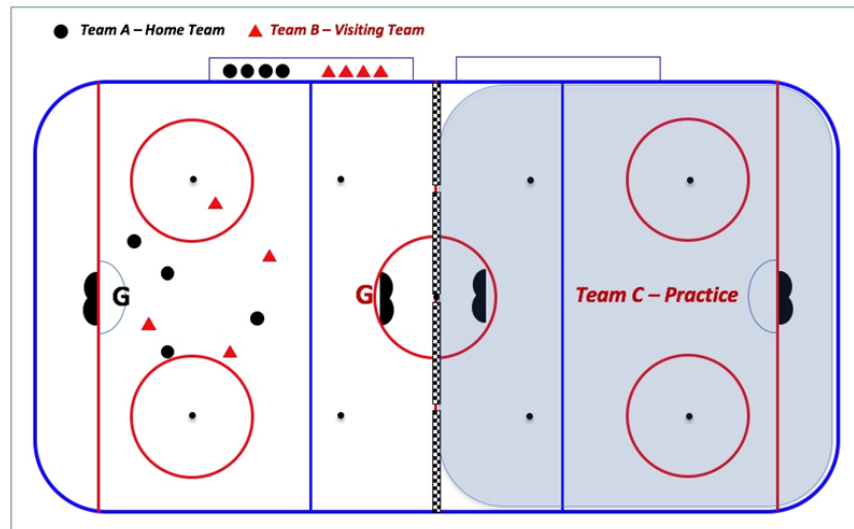


Figure 2: Two Team – One Half Ice Game Model – with Practice Sheet



U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



Roster Sizes

Tier 1: 16 skaters plus two goalies for a total of 18.

Tiers 2-4: 13 players to allow for 3 sets of 4 skaters plus a goaltender. Minimum roster size is 9, maximum roster size is 13; exceptions allowed based on local conditions and approved by the District Chair.

Goaltenders

Tier 1: Assigned or rotational goaltenders

Tiers 2-4: Recommended no full-time goaltenders. All players rotate in development/regular season phase 1 (September-December). There can be limited full time goaltenders – limited rotation in regular season phase 2 (January-April).

Team Formation (Tiers 2-4)

- Each Association operating Intra-District House Leagues or participating in an Inter-District House League within HEO Minor shall be assessed the following team ratings:
- Leagues operating at only one skill level shall be given an overall rating of 'Tier 3'. Each team in that Association shall be considered a 'Tier 3' team for the purpose of competition in tournaments or exhibition games outside of their District.
- Leagues operating at more than one skill level may follow a 20-60-20 split when dividing their teams into Tiers 2, 3 and 4. Leagues with participation of more than one Association may direct each Association to use this chart to submit teams for league play.
- These Tier levels will be considered for the purpose of competition in tournaments or exhibition games outside of their District.
- Where some Leagues can only support Tier 2 and 3 teams, the upper levels can be increased up to a 40-60 split. The Tier 3 level is maintained at a minimum of 60 % level

When splitting up players for station work in practices separate based on skill so all players can be challenged by enabling coaches to progress and regress drills as needed based on the skill set of each station group.

Implementing a deliberate age appropriate program at the **U9** level will give the participants in your association the upper hand in “reaching their potential” as hockey players. The game is about the kids who play, and it is time to give the game back to them.



U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



U9 - PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Based on Hockey Canada’s player development model coaches are to follow the below percentage of time when delivering practices.

Technical Skill (75-85 %) – fundamental skills that are required to play the game. (skating, shooting, passing)

Individual Tactic (15 %) – action by one player using one or a combination of technical skills to create an advantage or take away the advantage of an opponent. (1 vs. 1)

Team Tactic (0-10 %) – collective action of two or more players using technical skills and / or individual tactics to create an advantage or take away the advantage of an opponent. (3 vs. 2)

Team Play System (0 %) – a pattern of play in which the movement of all players is integrated in a coordinated fashion to accomplish an offensive or defensive objective. (2-1-2 forecheck)

Strategy (0 %) – the selection of team play systems in order to impose upon the opposition, the style of play and tactics which will build on the coach’s, team strengths and neutralize those of the opponent while at the same time taking advantage of the opponent’s weaknesses.

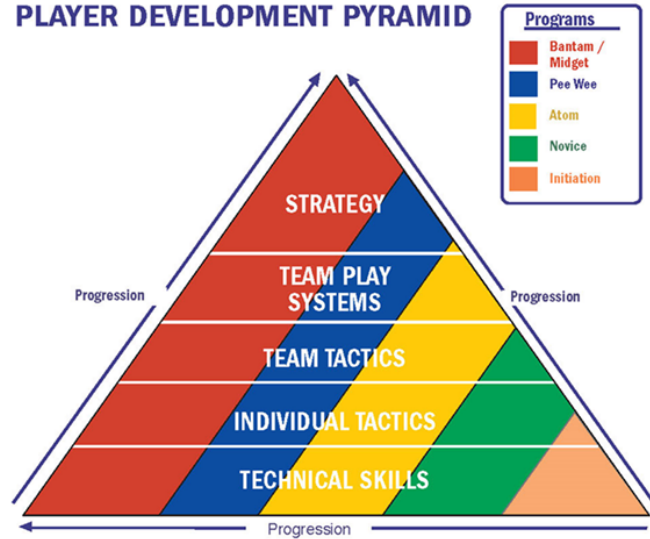
U7	U9
85 % - Technical Skills	75 % - Technical Skills
15 % - Individual Tactics	15 % - Individual Tactics
0 % - Team Tactics	10 % - Team Tactics
0 % - Team Play Systems	0 % - Team Play Systems
0 % - Strategy	0 % - Strategy



U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PYRAMID



As coaches navigate through the Intro to Hockey Model we have set priorities to simplify what is being worked on and in what format. Focussing on these five areas under each format will ensure players are receiving an age appropriate start to reaching their potential as a player.

Stations	Small Area Games	Half Ice
Fun & Enjoyment	Fun & Enjoyment	Fun & Enjoyment
Skill Acquisition	Puck Protection	Application of Skills
Error Detection / Correction	Transition	Play in Traffic
Maximize Activity	Support	Battle / Compete
Build Confidence	Decision Making Skills	Tactics

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE STUDY

(Tomas Peric)

STATION-BASED PRACTICES

Number of Practices Observed

20 **50**

TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Min.	Max.	Individual Skills		Min.	Max.
45	▶ 145	80 ◀	Shooting Average Number of Repetitions ▶	25	15 ▶ 45
45	▶ 170	90 ◀	Passing Average Number of Repetitions ▶	30	20 ▶ 50
45	▶ 155	70 ◀	Stickhandling Average Number of Repetitions ▶	20	10 ▶ 25





U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



Section 2: Rationale for U9 Programming

Benefits of Half Ice Games

“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, Canadian National Men’s Team

HOCKEY FOR LIFE, HOCKEY FOR EXCELLENCE

Sport Canada's Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) Resource Paper "Canadian Sport for Life" sets out a framework for sport development in Canada. Hockey Canada's Long Term Player Development (LTPD) is an eight-stage model based on the physical, mental, emotional and cognitive development of children and adolescents. Each stage reflects a different point in developing the player. The first three stages (Active for Life, Foundational and Developmental) are the most important. The next five stages focus on development and competitive excellence. Active for Life encourages life-long physical activity and informed healthy lifestyle choices with participation in hockey long after the competitive years.

PHYSICAL LITERACY	AGE 0-6	MALE AND FEMALE 0-6	Developing fundamental movement skills (crawling, running, jumping, landing, swimming). This is the foundation for all physical activity. In a variety of fun ways, young children learn to move and play.	FOUNDATIONAL
FOUNDATIONAL	AGE 6-10	MALE AND FEMALE 6-10	The child is the foundation of physical literacy. Fundamental movement skills should be reinforced and motor development experiences and participation in team sports enhance a message of fun, active play, and participation in sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 10-14	MALE 10-14 FEMALE 10-14	This is the most important period for development. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 14-18	MALE 14-18 FEMALE 14-18	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 18-24	MALE 18-24 FEMALE 18-24	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 24-30	MALE 24-30 FEMALE 24-30	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 30-35	MALE 30-35 FEMALE 30-35	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 35-40	MALE 35-40 FEMALE 35-40	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 40-45	MALE 40-45 FEMALE 40-45	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 45-50	MALE 45-50 FEMALE 45-50	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 50-55	MALE 50-55 FEMALE 50-55	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 55-60	MALE 55-60 FEMALE 55-60	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 60-65	MALE 60-65 FEMALE 60-65	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 65-70	MALE 65-70 FEMALE 65-70	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 70-75	MALE 70-75 FEMALE 70-75	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 75-80	MALE 75-80 FEMALE 75-80	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 80-85	MALE 80-85 FEMALE 80-85	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 85-90	MALE 85-90 FEMALE 85-90	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 90-95	MALE 90-95 FEMALE 90-95	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 95-100	MALE 95-100 FEMALE 95-100	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL
ACTIVE FOR LIFE	AGE 100+	MALE 100+ FEMALE 100+	The focus during this stage is on building an aerobic base, developing speed and strength and enhancing coordination. This is the window of opportunity to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity and to develop a love of sport. The focus is on developing fundamental skills and understanding the rules of the game.	FOUNDATIONAL






Hockey Canada – Long Term Player Development Model

Parents and coaches need to think long term and not worry too much about children being the best player on the ice in U7 and U9 hockey. Putting young players in a competitive environment to early will compromise the child’s development. Children should only be placed in to competitive situations that suit their skill level and abilities. Parents and coaches must be realistic about what children should be able to do all age levels. The Hockey Canada’s Long Term Player Development strategy is very important.

It is important to understand and appreciate the benefits of cross ice and half ice hockey and why Hockey Canada has a national policy ensuring all U7 and U9 level hockey is played in smaller, modified spaces.

- Increased emphasis on skating skills including agility, balance, coordination and quickness.
- The number of puck battles increases significantly.
- Puck control and puck protection skills are enhanced resulting in more confidence.
- The fundamentals of skating, puck control, passing, and shooting are reinforced.
- Less time and space increase the frequency and speed of making hockey decisions.
- A more challenging environment offered to improve ice awareness and elevate hockey sense.
- Increased intensity of competition results through the progressive skill improvement of players.
- The increase in incidental body contact requires players to play with their heads up and acquire spatial awareness.
- Players improve in the areas of contact confidence and body contact.

A quick statistical summary illustrates the advantages of the smaller-surface games model.

<div style="background-color: #c00; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">PUCK TOUCHES</div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">2X</div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; gap: 5px;"> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">CROSS-ICE</div> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">FULL-ICE</div> </div>  </div>	<p>Small spaces equate to more engaged in the play:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All players are close to the play at all times and have much more opportunity for puck touches. Regardless of the skill level or the ability of each player, their opportunities to be engaged in the play increase by double when the playing areas is smaller.
<div style="background-color: #c00; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">SHOT ATTEMPTS</div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">6X</div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; gap: 5px;"> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">CROSS-ICE</div> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">FULL-ICE</div> </div>  </div>	<p>A very large difference between full ice and small areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are 6 times as many shots on goal or at goal in a cross-ice or half ice game. Players are closer to the puck at all times and the puck finds its way to the net much more often. Goalies are more engaged & feel a bigger part of game.
<div style="background-color: #c00; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">SHOTS ON GOAL</div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">3X</div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; gap: 5px;"> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">CROSS-ICE</div> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">FULL ICE</div> </div>  </div>	<p>Shrinking the playing surface increases offense:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Players are much closer to the nets, skate shorter distance from goal to goal, and have increased opportunities for offensive play. Goalies are forced to make more saves thus increasing their development.
<div style="background-color: #c00; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">PASS ATTEMPTS</div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">2X</div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; gap: 5px;"> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">CROSS-ICE</div> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">FULL-ICE</div> </div>  </div>	<p>More of a team game is apparent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the smaller area games, players are observed passing and attempting to pass the puck more often. This results for two reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All players are close enough to pressure the puck more frequently. Teammates are in close support of the puck carry at all times.
<div style="background-color: #c00; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">PASSES RECEIVED</div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">5X</div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; gap: 5px;"> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">CROSS-ICE</div> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">FULL-ICE</div> </div>  </div>	<p>Short quick passes find their mark:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In smaller spaces, more passes are attempted and most of these passes are 5 to 10 feet in length. When passes are shorter, accuracy improves, and players tend to have more success receiving the pass. Players also start to understand the importance of puck possession.

Conclusion: (Hockey Alberta Skating Study 2018)

Half-Ice training is better at supporting kids to reach their hockey potential and more fun!
Every player benefit from half-ice hockey but more advanced players benefit the most.

Acceleration

- Skating acceleration speeds increased as the ice surface size was reduced.

Top Speed

- Average distance players needed to reach top speed was 65 feet.
- Advanced skaters reached top speed in 60 feet or less.

What does it mean?

- Effective skating is a combination of turns, pivots, stops, starts and transitions.
- NHL's No. 1 skill isn't top speed; it's the ability to change speeds and accelerate quickly.
- Cross Ice / Half Ice trains players to skate the game, rather than simply skating fast in straight lines.
- NHL players have a top speed of 40 km/h, but they only spend 20% of each game skating above 19 km/h and they reach top speed less than 2% of the time. (PowerScout Hockey)

"The flat out use of maximum speed in hockey simply doesn't happen very often. What does happen is that you have to be adjusting, changing, going forward, backward, lateral, always turning and moving toward the puck: that's agility skating... smaller areas generate more stops, starts and turns."

Dr. George Kingston

Former NHL and Team Canada Head Coach

WHERE IS THE GAME PLAYED AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL?



AVERAGE NHL PLAYER

Height: 6'1" (73.1")

Weight: 200.7 lbs.

Age: 27.1 years

WHERE IS THE GAME PLAYED?

87% - O-Zone & D-Zone

13% - Neutral Zone



U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



CHILD GROWTH AVERAGES

U9 maximum ice surface size for games is to be played on 100' x 85'.

Age	Size	Boys	Girls
5 years	Weight	37.5 - 44.7 pounds	36.3 - 44.0 pounds
	Height	41.7 - 44.2 inches	41.3 - 43.8 inches
6 years	Weight	41.9 - 50.6 pounds	40.8 - 50.0 pounds
	Height	44.2 - 46.9 inches	43.9 - 46.7 inches
7 years	Weight	46.5 - 56.8 pounds	45.6 - 56.6 pounds
	Height	46.6 - 49.5 inches	46.5 - 49.4 inches
8 years	Weight	51.5 - 63.6 pounds	50.9 - 64.3 pounds
	Height	48.9 - 52.0 inches	48.8 - 51.9 inches

Section 3: Game Play Guidelines and Rules

1. PLAYER EVALUATION

No player evaluation/ selection/ tryouts prior to or during the first week of school

No player evaluation during the off season phase (March through August)

No player evaluation during the first week of school where school 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 player selection can commence

2. DEVELOPMENT PHASE

During the development phase, coaches should be focused on skill development. The Hockey Canada Skills manual provides coaches with a series of well-crafted practice plans (ice sessions) that focus on developing fundamental movement skills like striding, turning, and stopping, manipulation skills like shooting, passing, puck control and the very important motor skills of agility, balance, coordination.



U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



3. REGULAR SEASON PHASE

The regular season phase represents the bulk of the seasonal structure. It is important that coaches continue to focus on skill development during practice sessions. Hockey Canada has developed resources to support coaches in their efforts to deliver practice plans. The Hockey Canada Network and the Drill Hub can be found at www.hockeeasternontario.ca.

MHAs may wish to rebalance Tier 2-4 teams at the beginning of the second phase.

MHAs may wish to re-open registration between phases one and two to capture players coming from Young Sens or First Shift programs, or late interest players.

There are no Playoffs for U9. Year end tournament or jamboree recommended.

U9 SEASONAL STRUCTURE		
Months	September - October	November - March
Phase	Development	Regular
Approx. Dates	Sept. 15 – Oct. 31	Nov. 1 – Mar. 22
Ice Sessions (Maximum)	Development Season	Regular Season
26 Weeks	6 Weeks	20 Weeks
50 Practices	12 Practices	38 Practices
25 Games	2 Games	18 Games
3 Jamborees / Festivals	0 Jamborees / Festivals	3 Jamborees / Festivals
Seasonal Practice to Game Ratio:	2:1 (Ideal)	
Ice times per week	2 or 3 max (Ideal)	
League play shall consist of a maximum of 20 regular season games (not including the end of the year jamboree) Teams may participate in a maximum of 3 Jamborees/ Tournaments (not including year-end Jamboree) All teams shall have a minimum 1:1 ratio of practices to games during the season		

GAME PLAY GUIDELINES

General Playing Rules

The rules for half-ice U9 game play focus on player development by maximizing opportunities to touch the puck, interact with other players, and make plays.

- 4 vs 4 player format and one goaltender for each team.
- Each team must have two goaltenders, one for each half of the ice.
- Three-minute warm-up.
- Game length – 50 minutes in total (46 minutes post warm-up). This may vary if Associations schedule multiple blocks of ice time.
- Two 23-minute halves.
- Shift length – 90 seconds in duration with an automatic buzzer or whistle sounding to indicate player change. The clock continues to run through the 23-minute half.
- Both games synchronized, and officials work together to ensure that happens.
- Players change on the fly at the buzzer or whistle.
- If there are fewer than four players on the bench, the active player designated to stay out for the following shift must tag up at the bench prior to continuing play.
- Two face-offs during the game.
 - The first face-off will start the game.
 - The second face-off will start the second half
- **There is no requirement that teams change ends at the half**

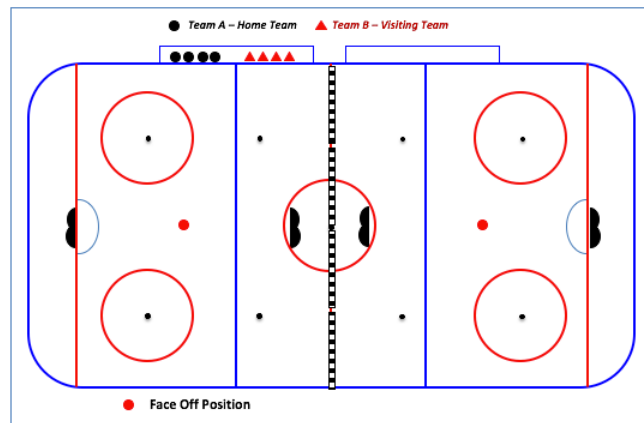


Figure 3: Location of the Face off dot

Shifts

- Player shifts are 90 seconds in length. A buzzer or whistle sounds to signal line changes.
- On the buzzer/whistle sounds, players must relinquish control of the puck immediately and vacate the ice. The new players enter the ice immediately.



U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



- Failure to immediately relinquish control of the puck or new players entering the ice surface prematurely may result in a penalty for the offending team.

Change of Possession

- Goaltender freezes the puck – the official blows the whistle to indicate the attacking team backs off and defending team gets possession.
- Puck shot out of play – the offending team backs off and the official gives the non-offending team a new puck.

Officiating

- One official per game. Coaches/Trainers must remain on the bench.

Penalties

- Penalties shall be called in accordance with the Hockey Canada Officiating Program (HCOP) standard of play, within a learning environment where new officials are learning how to apply the rules.
- Minor penalties are noted with the official briefly raising their arm to indicate a penalty will be assessed. The referee will blow their whistle and immediately escort the offending player to the player's bench. The offending team will substitute a new player on, and the play will continue 4 vs 4
- If the offending team controls the puck after the infraction, the official blows the whistle and calls for a change of possession; the non-offending team is given room to play the puck (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, gross misconduct or match penalty), the player will be removed from the remainder of that game. Even under these circumstances, teams will not play short handed.
- For major penalties assessed to players and bench staff, the HEO Minor Code of Discipline will apply.

Scoring

- Game scores will not be recorded. Game sheets may be used to capture major penalties to players or bench staff in-game.
- When the puck enters the goal, the official will blow the whistle and signal a goal, retrieve the puck from the net and allow the team that was scored on to take



U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



possession of the puck. The team that scored backs off 3 metres and gives the player with the puck room to start the play.

Out-of-Branch Tournaments

- Teams will be permitted to participate in out-of-Branch tournaments (requiring travel permits) if the tournament games are played on half-ice.

Section 4: Frequently Asked Questions

1. *How will player development be affected if there are no offside or icing called during game play?*

The game play model is a 4 vs 4 model on half ice. 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 the areas of skating, puck control, pass receiving and shooting. Concepts like offside, icing, positional play and face-offs (which are mental skills) can be introduced when players move to the full ice game play model in the transition to Atom hockey.

2. *Are teams permitted to identify a full-time goaltender?*

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

3. *Is there a need to draw a crease in for the net situated in the neutral zone?*

No. Each net should be placed just inside the centre circle which will provide a small marking to aid the goaltender with positioning in front of the net. The centre circle line will be used as the goal line for the neutral zone net.



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



U9 RESOURCE GUIDE



Small spaces equate to more engaged in the play and activity for young players. Through small area station-based practices and half ice games, players are closer to the play and have much more opportunity to be engaged in the game. Regardless of the skill level or the ability of each player, opportunities to be engaged in the play double when the playing area is smaller. The NHL Analytics research illustrated that all skill areas of the game increased substantially when players played in small spaces more suited to their age and skill level.

5. 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. The half-ice playing surface can be a maximum of 100' by 85' if the dividers are placed at the centre red line. In a study conducted by Hockey Alberta, the half-ice playing surface illustrated the same stride distance for a child as relative to the full sheet of ice for an adult.

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

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