



HOCKEY CANADA INITIATION PROGRAM

Resource Guide



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Section 1:

Introduction to 'Timbits' Initiation Hockey





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“DEVELOPING SKILLS FIRST”

The Hockey Canada Initiation Program is an essential component in developing the hockey skills of all young girls and boys playing hockey in Canada. The Hockey Canada Initiation Skill Development resource is the official hockey instructional curriculum of Hockey Canada.

Introduction

How a player gets their initial taste of hockey is crucial. The first few years of hockey must be a positive experience full of fun and excitement.

If the beginner has fun, develops basic skills and builds confidence, there is a better chance they will go on to enjoy hockey for a lifetime. But if a young player has an unhappy, unrewarding experience, they may quit at an early age and never discover the real joy of Canada's game. Every young player should have the opportunity to enjoy hockey for life!

Almost all local minor hockey associations organize house leagues and/or representative teams. But more and more minor hockey associations are also delivering age-appropriate programming. It is obvious that unprepared young players who are put directly into playing the adult version of the game are at a distinct disadvantage to youngsters who have had the benefits of experiencing progressive skill development.

The goal of Hockey Canada is to see the day when every youngster across Canada getting started in hockey will have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from a program designed to meet their specific needs. One that ensures progressive skill development through well-delivered practice sessions and age-appropriate game play in an environment well suited to their skill level.

A minor hockey association's programming at the Initiation level will serve as the foundation upon which the entire minor hockey association is built. Youngsters at every level in minor hockey benefit from getting the 'right start' in the game. Programming at the Initiation level is a crucial piece in building the skills of house league and rep team players alike.

More than 30 years ago, Hockey Canada developed the Initiation Program to ensure a fun, safe and positive hockey experience. It served as a structured, learn-to-play program designed to introduce beginners to basic skills. It also enabled young players to build a solid skill base and become contributing members of a team effort, develop self-confidence and experience a sense of personal achievement – goals achieved in an atmosphere of fun and fair play.

Dating back to 1995, Hockey Canada passed a motion requiring the Initiation Program to 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.



"Learning the basic skills at a young age will set the foundation for everything a player will accomplish in the game of hockey."
Corey McNabb, Director of Hockey Development Programs, Hockey Canada

Hockey Canada Policy for Initiation Hockey

The future of hockey lies with today's youth. Because of this, Hockey Canada has developed age-appropriate programming as a way to encourage the growth of foundational skills. Minor hockey associations and coaches lead the implementation of the Initiation programs 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 in order to improve the quality of the hockey experience through sound instruction and enjoyable play.

The success of grassroots hockey programming is measured by the level of development young players achieve. To optimize these levels, dedicated adults must play a large role as leaders and teachers who will create a challenging and motivating environment for all young players.

The goals and objectives of Initiation hockey programming are to:

- Teach all basic skills of hockey so players can enjoy the game.
- Assist in development and enhancement of physical literacy and basic motor patterns.
- Develop and encourage the concepts of being a team member through player participation in both on-ice and off-ice activities.
- Encourage aspects of fitness, fair play and cooperation while having fun.

About the 'Timbits' Initiation Program

- Programming should be delivered through a progressive learn-to-play teaching curriculum that meets the needs of the five and six-year-old age group. Children learn best through participating in practice drills and sessions as well as informal and modified games such as shinny, freeze tag and obstacle courses.
- The program consists of two levels of instruction, designed specifically for young hockey players. Each level consists of a series of practice plans (lesson plans) that follow a defined path of progressions.
- The skills of skating, puck control, passing and shooting are introduced and refined in a progressive 'one step at a time' manner.



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- Although the emphasis is on fun and skill development, hockey at these ages should also allow youngsters to experience fitness, fair play and cooperation.
- To ensure a positive experience for the children, a coaching clinic has been designed for the on-ice coaches that focuses on communication, teaching skills, leadership, skill analysis, lesson organization, and safety and risk management.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

- Hockey Canada developed the program to ensure that the child's early experiences with hockey are delivered in a safe and positive experience.
- The program enables participants to become contributing members of a team effort, develop self-confidence and experience a sense of personal achievement.

PROGRAM GOALS

- To have fun while playing hockey and engaging in physical activity.
- To learn the fundamental skills required to play the game of hockey.
- To develop and refine basic motor patterns.
- To be introduced to the concepts of cooperation and fair play.

Components

The following resources are available to support minor hockey associations and coaches in the design and delivery of programming that meets the needs of young players between the ages of five and eight years old. A wide variety of materials are available for download [HERE](#).

Administrator's Guide

The purpose of the Administrator's Guide is to acquaint local organizers with the half-ice program, and how to put the program to good use in the minor hockey association.

This guide includes an overview of Hockey Canada rules for half-ice hockey, model programs, information on setting up the Initiation program, supporting parent information presentations, the importance of instructor training and an outline of the programming resources to support proper hockey instructional methodology.

Instructor's Manual

The Instructor's Manual was designed to give coaches all of the necessary information needed to teach hockey skills to players between the ages of five and eight years old.



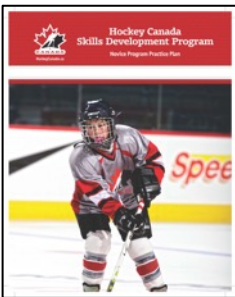
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Some of the areas discussed are leadership, communication, teaching skills and lesson organization. Each of these components contains valuable information when it comes time to implement each of the ice-session plans from the Hockey Canada Skills Manuals.

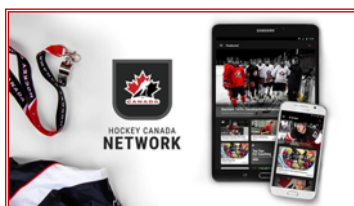
Ice-Session Plans (Lesson Plans)



The Initiation Program Practice Plan Manual is a compilation of ideas from top hockey people across Canada. These plans are available through the Hockey Canada Network or the Hockey Canada Skill Development Program Manual series. These plans map out easy-to-follow ice sessions. Initiation hockey players need to progress throughout these ice sessions to ensure they are exposed to age-appropriate drills and activities that will develop their confidence. The goal is to support the development of a sound skill base so young players will experience success playing the game.

The plans are designed to serve as a model for on-ice delivery. Minor hockey associations are not required to follow each ice session exactly as planned, but the development of these resources takes into account the needs of young players who are new to hockey and on the road to building a sound set of hockey skills. Each minor hockey association should encourage their coaches to use these ice session plans so players will be guided through a skill-development program that has been specifically designed for Initiation players.

The **Hockey Canada Network** is an iOS and Android app that contains a wealth of information for coaches and instructors. The entire series of Hockey Canada Skills Manuals and the Skills of Gold DVD series are available on the Hockey Canada Network. This includes the entire series of lesson plans designed specifically for the Initiation Program.



All lesson plans at the Initiation level are available to coaches and instructors at no cost. While there is a fee to access all the resources in the **Hockey Canada Network**, downloading the free version of the app will permit the user to create an account and log in to access all the resources that support the Initiation level of programming.

The **Hockey Canada Drill Hub** is located at HockeyCanada.ca. This coach resource tool also provides coaches of Initiation players with access to all of the program ice-session plans for free.



Coaches can sign up to have free access to Hockey Canada's growing library of drills.

- Coaches can create a practice plan with a set of drills or use suggested practice plans.
- Plans are easy to print or view on most devices.

Minor hockey associations must encourage coaches to access both resource platforms to ensure they have up-to-date resources to support the program implementation.



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Cross-Ice Hockey

At times, there can be concerns from parents about how small-area games may impact their child's hockey development. But we ask parents to trust the development experts and not worry about their child being the best player on the ice. It is also important to remind parents that putting young players into a competitive environment too early will compromise their development. Children need to be placed into competitive situations that suit their age-appropriate abilities. And parents need to be realistic about what children should be able to do all age levels. This is why Hockey Canada's Long-Term Player Development strategy is so important.

It is important to fully understand and appreciate the benefits of cross-ice hockey. The configuration of dividing the playing surface into cross-ice is a decision that has been made in consultation with experts in athlete development. An overview of very simple statistics illustrates a number of advantages to the smaller surface game model (see Section 2: Rationale for Initiation Programming).

- Increases the emphasis on skating skills, including elements like agility, balance, coordination and quickness.
- Number of puck battles increases.
- Puck control and puck protection skills are enhanced, which will help players succeed at higher levels.
- Fundamentals of skating, puck control, passing and shooting are reinforced at a greater rate.
- Increase in incidental body contact requires players to play with their head up, preparing players for proper use of body contact and checking skills in the future.
- Less time and space increase the frequency of making hockey decisions.
- Better environment for teaching ice awareness and boosts hockey sense.
- Over time, the intensity level of competition increases with the progressive skill development of players.

NCCP Community Coach Stream – Coach 1 Clinic

The NCCP Coach 1 – Intro to Coach clinic supports Initiation coaches across Canada and provides coaches with the proper content for working with children at this level, as well as providing instruction in the delivery of the program itself.

The Community Coach Stream clinic is part of the new NCCP Coaching Program and is available through Hockey Canada's online Hockey University.



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Recognizing the necessity to provide a positive experience for young hockey players, the Initiation Program builds upon a number of values that provide quality experiences, including:

- Providing a safe environment in which to be introduced to fundamental skills.
- Developing an understanding of basic teamwork through participation in structured activities and adapted game-like situations.
- Introducing participants to the concepts of fair and cooperative play.
- Refining basic motor patterns and building self-confidence.
- Providing an environment that challenges individuals positively and rewards the participants for their efforts.
- Providing opportunities to experience a number of related activities in the building of a lifestyle of fitness and activity.

Community Coach Stream Clinic Target Audience

- Leadership is a key component to the Initiation program. Parents volunteer their time as coaches, instructors and administrators, providing a positive, non-competitive learning and playing experience for all children.
- As coaches and instructors, they are responsible to be effective leaders and teachers, acting as role models for cooperation and fair play.
- As administrators, parents are responsible for organizing the details that lead to the on-ice sessions, such as promotion of the program, registration, booking ice times and communicating with parents regarding schedules.

“Scaling down is important and the research shows that when children are more actively engaged, they touch the puck more often, have the puck on their stick longer, and are interacting with one another to a greater extent.”

Dr. Stephen Norris, Consultant to Hockey Canada

Policy Overview

Six-and-under games will be played cross-ice for the entire season.

- Use the first 10-12 weeks as a development phase – no games, just practices.
- Play a limited number of cross-ice games during the 12-14-week development phase.
- Use 3 to 4 weeks after Christmas as a development phase, with more focus on practice sessions to reinforce skills acquired in the first half of the season.
- Play a cross-ice game schedule from February to March with the introduction of jamboree and/or tournament play focused on cross-ice play.



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For mixed programming, there will be three options available to choose from:

- Deliver cross-ice programming for the full year to players 5-6 years old;
- Deliver cross-ice programming for the full year to players 5-6 years old and provide a six-week transition program to the players that are six years old in February and March;
- Deliver programming above for players six years old for the mixed age group with the understanding that the players five years old will repeat the programming as a six-year-old.

Conclusion

- Hockey Canada plays an important role in ensuring minor hockey associations have the necessary resources, tools and supports for young players from 5-6 years old. Hockey Canada believes developing the fundamental skills and attitudes to play the game and recognizes this will foster an enjoyment of hockey as a lifetime participation sport.
- Initiation-level programming is intended to focus on children ages five and six years old and is age-appropriate for all young hockey players.
- Annually, the number of girls and boys between the ages of five and six registered with Hockey Canada is 75,000; these 75,000 players make up approximately 15% of all registered minor players in the grassroots Hockey Canada system.
- Approximately 8,000 coaches and instructors volunteer each season to teach and lead programming at the Initiation level of hockey.
- Hockey Canada has approximately 2,500 minor hockey associations that receive education, training and resources outlining the benefits of participating in all levels of minor hockey programming, and these associations are encouraged to deliver age-appropriate programming to their membership.
- This resource guide outlines the significant benefits of delivering age-appropriate programming across Canada. The future of minor hockey in Canada lies within the quality hockey development programs offered to young players.



Section 2: ***Rationale for Initiation Programming***



Benefits of Cross-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, Canada’s National Men’s Team***

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 Initiation hockey. Research has proven that putting young players into a competitive environment too early will compromise their development. Children should only be placed into competitive situations that suit their skill level and abilities.

It is important to fully understand and appreciate the benefits of cross-ice and half-ice hockey and why Hockey Canada has a national policy ensuring all Initiation hockey is played in smaller, modified spaces (see Page 9 for more details).

An illustration of very simple statistics illustrates highlight the advantages to the smaller surface games model.



Small spaces equate to more engagement in the play:

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 are doubled when the playing area is smaller.



A very large difference between full-ice and small areas:

There are six times as many shots at goal in a cross-ice or half-ice game, because players are closer to the puck at all times and the puck finds its way to the net much more often.



Shrinking the playing surface increases offence:

Players are much closer to the net, skate shorter distance from goal to goal and have increased opportunities for offensive play.



More of a team game is apparent:

Players are observed passing and attempting to pass the puck more often. This is for two reasons:

1. All players are close enough to pressure the puck more frequently.
2. Teammates are in close support of the puck carrier at all times



Short, quick passes find their mark:

In smaller spaces, more passes are attempted and most of these passes are two to three meters in length. When passes are shorter, accuracy improves and players have more success receiving the pass. Players also start to understand the important of team puck possession.

“You need to be able to make quick passes and have quick communication. Small area games are important.”
Brianne Jenner, Canada’s National Women’s Team



Section 3:

Initiation Game Play Guidelines and Rules of Play





Game Play Guidelines

SEASONAL STRUCTURE

The Initiation Seasonal Structure can take on many forms. This section identifies a set of minimum standards that Hockey Canada membership must adhere to. Keep in mind, there is some flexibility because the framework below (see Figures 1 and 2) provides a set of recommended timeframes when minor hockey associations build their seasonal plan. If the season starts in October or even as late as November, the minor hockey association should still follow the guidelines of a balanced season approach. Some of the dates and timeframes are guidelines while others are fixed. The number of games and practices are also recommendations based on what Hockey Canada has set out in the Long-Term Player Development Model and Initiation Player Pathway documents.

1. DEVELOPMENT PHASE

During the development phase, coaches should be focused on skill development. The ideal practice to game ratio has been identified as 3:1, or three practice sessions to one game played. The start of the season for Initiation players is not a fixed time. Therefore, the guidelines outlined in the Initiation Seasonal Structure are just that – guidelines.

The goal for every minor hockey association should be to set aside a window of time where young players have more practices than games. The Hockey Canada Initiation 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 and coordination. All of these components should be a part of player-centred skill development in a fun and safe environment that promotes self-confidence.

2. REGULAR SEASON PHASE

The regular season phase represents the bulk of the season in the Initiation Seasonal Structure. The practice to game ratio shifts to 2:1 or two practices for every game played.

It is important that coaches continue to focus on skill development during practice sessions. Once again, the Hockey Canada Initiation Skills Manual provides a wide variety of resources in the form of practice sessions as well as drills that will assist in the delivery of practices that will meet the skill development needs of young players. Hockey Canada has developed additional resources to support coaches in their efforts to deliver practice plans. The [Hockey Canada Network](#), [Drill Hub](#) and the [Initiation Program](#) all contain age-appropriate and skill-specific resources to meet the needs of young Initiation hockey players.

Even though the regular season phase has a lower practice to game ratio (2:1) through the months of November, December and January, there are still up to 24 possible practice sessions to support and encourage young players through this skill acquisition phase of the season.

3. GAME PLAY PHASE OR TRANSITION PHASE

The approved Hockey Canada policy for Initiation hockey permits the introduction of half-ice game play in the later part of the season for second year Initiation players. In the event there is a desire to introduce second-year Initiation players to the half-ice game model, membership is required to wait until after January 15 to allow Initiation teams to participate in half-ice games.

The transition phase has a practice to game ratio of 1:1, or one practice to one game played. It is important to ensure practice sessions continue through the Transition Phase. This will provide coaches with the opportunity to continue to reinforce individual skill development elements in practices in addition to introducing players to concepts attached to the full-ice game.

SEASONAL STRUCTURE				
INITIATION				
WEEKS	Up to 12 Weeks - prior to the start of the Regular Season phase	Up to 14 weeks - after the completion of the Development Phase	Up to 4 Weeks at the conclusion of the Regular Season Phase	
PHASE	Development Phase	Regular Season Phase	Game Play Phase	
ICE SET-UP	Cross ice games	Cross Ice games	Cross / Half Ice Games	
BALANCE	40% of the season	45% of the season	15% of the season	
VOLUME	30 weeks	Up to 12 Weeks	Up to 14 Weeks	Up to 4 Weeks
	35-45 practices	24 Practice Sessions	20 Practice Sessions	6-8 Practices Sessions
	15-25 games	0 Games	Up to 10 Games	Up to 12 Games
	3 jamboree/festivals	1 Jamboree	1 Jamboree	1 Jamboree

1

INITIATION HOCKEY 

FIGURE 1: Initiation Seasonal Structure – Full Season of Cross-Ice Play

GAME PLAY GUIDELINES

The Game Play format is referred to as the Two-Team Game Play Model (see Figure 3.1). This model is built on two teams playing one another in two halves or the two ends zones. Each Initiation team is divided into two units. A player may play goal but is not required to wear full goaltender equipment.

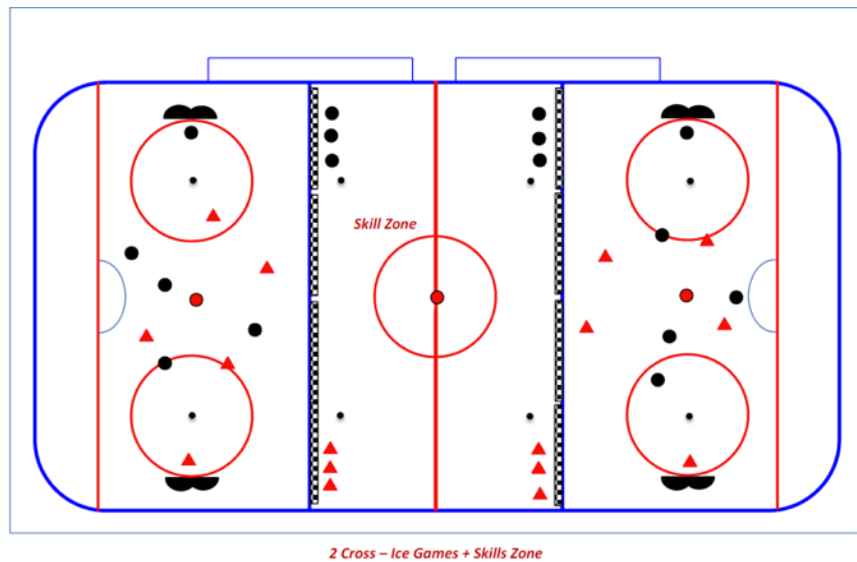


FIGURE 3.1: Three Teams – Two Cross-Ice Games Model with Skill Zone

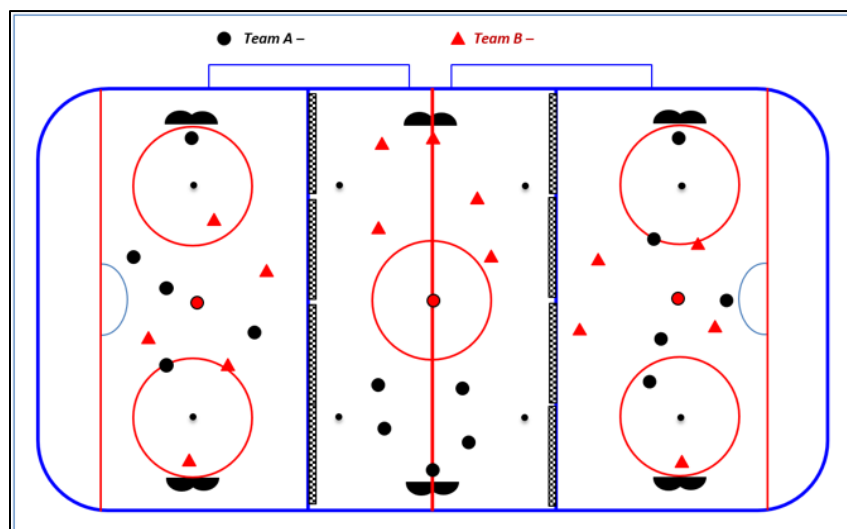


FIGURE 3.2: Three Teams – Three Cross-Ice Games Model



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

- In the two teams, two half-ice games model, each team will consist of up to 18 players (16 skaters and two goaltenders) divided into two units of nine players. Each team unit of nine players will have one goaltender and eight skaters. Smaller numbers will allow for players to double shift to ensure there are always four players on the ice. Coaches must make sure all players take turns double shifting.
- While not a requirement, the ideal length of a game is 50 minutes (2 x 25-minute halves) plus a three-minute warm-up.
- It is recommended that in each half, the centre spot should be marked to indicate where the face-off will take place. This is to be established at the midpoint between both nets.
- When play is stopped due to the goaltender freezing the puck or a goal being scored, the referee will signal the attacking players to back off three meters. Once the attackers have moved back, the players may resume play as soon as the possession team has control of the puck. In the event a puck goes out of play, the referee will provide a new puck to the non-offending team and the offending team will be required to provide a three-meter cushion.
- Incidental contact may happen, but body-checking is not permitted.
- There is no centre ice (red) line, and therefore no icing.
- There are no blue lines in play, therefore there are no offsides.
- The home team shall defend the two ends of the rink, while the visiting team shall defend the centre ice nets.
- When the buzzer sounds to end the first half, the visiting team will switch ends and switch benches, so players can play against the other half of the opposing team.
- Teams will share the respective player benches with each team using the gate closest to the net they are defending.
- The main score clock can be used to keep time for both games simultaneously.
- No score is kept, and no game sheets are necessary.



RULES FOR CROSS-ICE GAME PLAY

PLAYING RULES

- 4 vs. 4 format – a player may play goal, but full goaltender equipment is not required.
- Three-minute warm-up.
- Rink set-up:
 - One set of barriers or two sets of barriers with a space in between for spare players
- Game length – 50 minutes (varies by region).
 - Two 25-minute halves.
- Shift length – one minute in duration with an automatic buzzer or whistle sounding to indicate players change. The clock continues to run throughout the 25-minute half.
 - Games can be synchronized using the main time clock.
 - Coaches or officials work together to keep the games synchronized.
- Players can change on the fly or when the change buzzer sounds.
 - 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.
- There will be two face-offs during the game:
 - The first face-off will start the game.
 - The second face-off will start the second half.

SHIFTS

- Player shifts are recommended to be one minute in length. A buzzer or whistle will sound to signal line changes. Length of shift may be adapted at a local level – i.e. 90 second shift length.
- On the buzzer/whistle sounds, players must relinquish control of the puck immediately and vacate the ice. The new players enter the ice immediately.
- Failure to immediately relinquish control of the puck or new players entering the ice surface prematurely may result in a penalty (see below) for the offending team.

CHANGE OF POSSESSION

- Goaltender freezes the puck – the coach or 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.



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PENALTIES

- Minor penalties are noted with the official briefly raising their arm to indicate a penalty will be assessed. At the conclusion of the shift, the official notifies the coach of the infraction and the number of the offending player.
- 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-meter cushion).
- The offending player will sit out the next shift, but the team will play even strength.
- Should an infraction occur that would normally require a player to be ejected from the game (game misconduct, match penalty or gross misconduct), the player will be removed from the remainder of that game. Even under these circumstances, teams will not play shorthanded and no game incident report will be required.



Section 4:

Initiation Game Play Officiating Guidelines





ROLE OF THE OFFICIAL

SPECIAL THANKS TO BC HOCKEY FOR SHARING ITS OFFICIATING GUIDELINES

NOTE: SEE GAME PLAY GUIDELINES (PAGES 18-21) FOR GAME-SPECIFIC RULES

INTRODUCTION

Hockey Canada recommends the inclusion of officials at the Initiation level. At this level a one-official system will be employed. While this is not an official Hockey Canada Officiating Program (HCOP) system, this section provides an outline to assist local officiating programs with integrating officials into this developmental stage of the game. The system provides officials with an opportunity to experience several aspects of officiating, while keeping the operating costs at a manageable level for the teams and minor hockey associations. Games may be officiated by team coaches as well.

BENEFITS OF INVOLVING OFFICIALS IN CROSS-ICE HOCKEY

There are numerous benefits for officials when considering the aspects of building foundational skills. This is a valuable opportunity for newer officials to put on their uniform, get on the ice in live action and learn basic aspects of being an official in a less formal and positive atmosphere. Basic skills include dropping pucks, skating skills, foundational positioning, spatial awareness, establishing good sightlines and making decisions such as goals and minor infractions.

This allows officials to apply newly acquired information they received in their clinic in a game environment. It also provides an excellent opportunity for senior officials to mentor newcomers by shadowing them on the ice or evaluating them from the stands. The ability to mentor officials at ice level in this structure provides instantaneous feedback and assists in preparing these officials for full-ice games in a two- or three-official system.

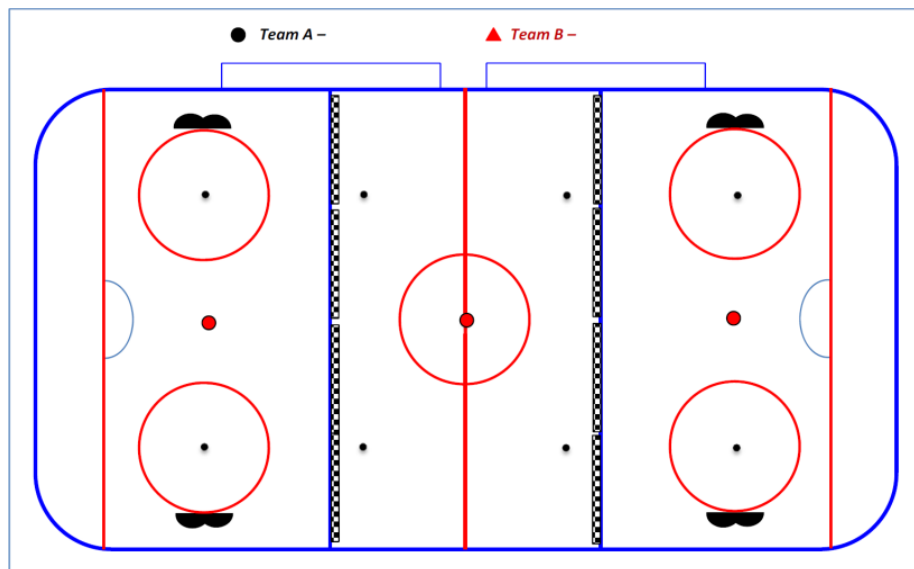
Having an official for cross-ice games provides players with more structure. It also presents a more realistic game environment, while allowing the coaches to keep their focus on the players.

OFFICIATING PROCEDURES

Flexibility is an important component to operating in a one-official system within the Initiation structure. There is no absolute way to handle every possible scenario. However, game flow and establishing a basic structure to the game is the primary focus. Officials will NOT be required to call infractions for icing or off-side as the appropriate rink dimensions and markings are not available.

FACE-OFFS

There will be one face-off location. This will be located approximately halfway between the goals (see Figure 4). Coaches and arena staff may mark the centre face-off location with a temporary marking for game play purposes.



Cross Ice – Face off Dots

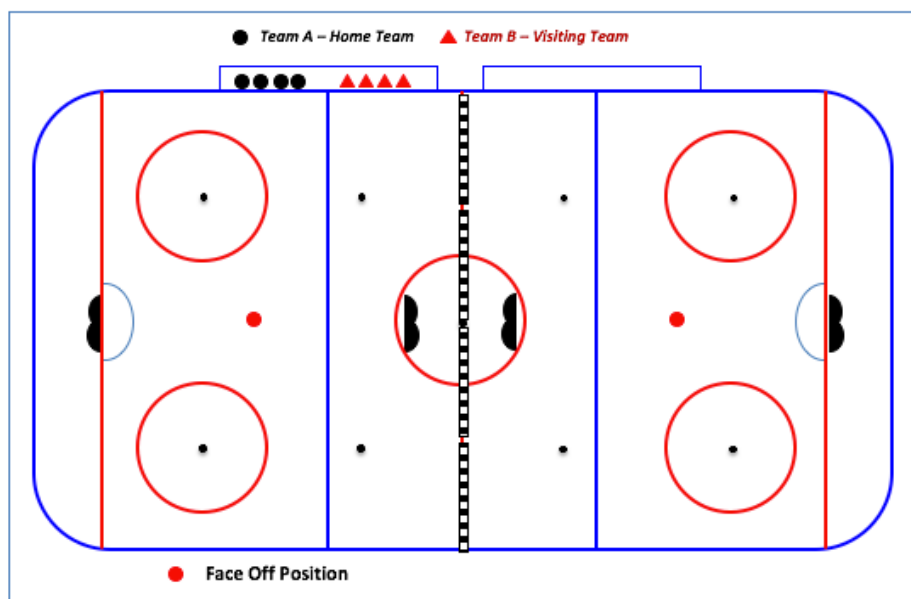


Figure 4: Location of the Face-Off Dot

POSITIONING

Foundational positioning principles will be used. The concept of the 'cone' should be reserved for when full-ice play begins. Under the half-ice structure, approximate positioning should be used to get officials comfortable with their proximity to the goal (see Figure 5). Officials should follow the play approximately two to three meters behind the puck carrier. They should remain about one meter from the boards or playing area perimeters. The examples on Figure 5 show guidelines for establishing recommended end-zone positions.

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

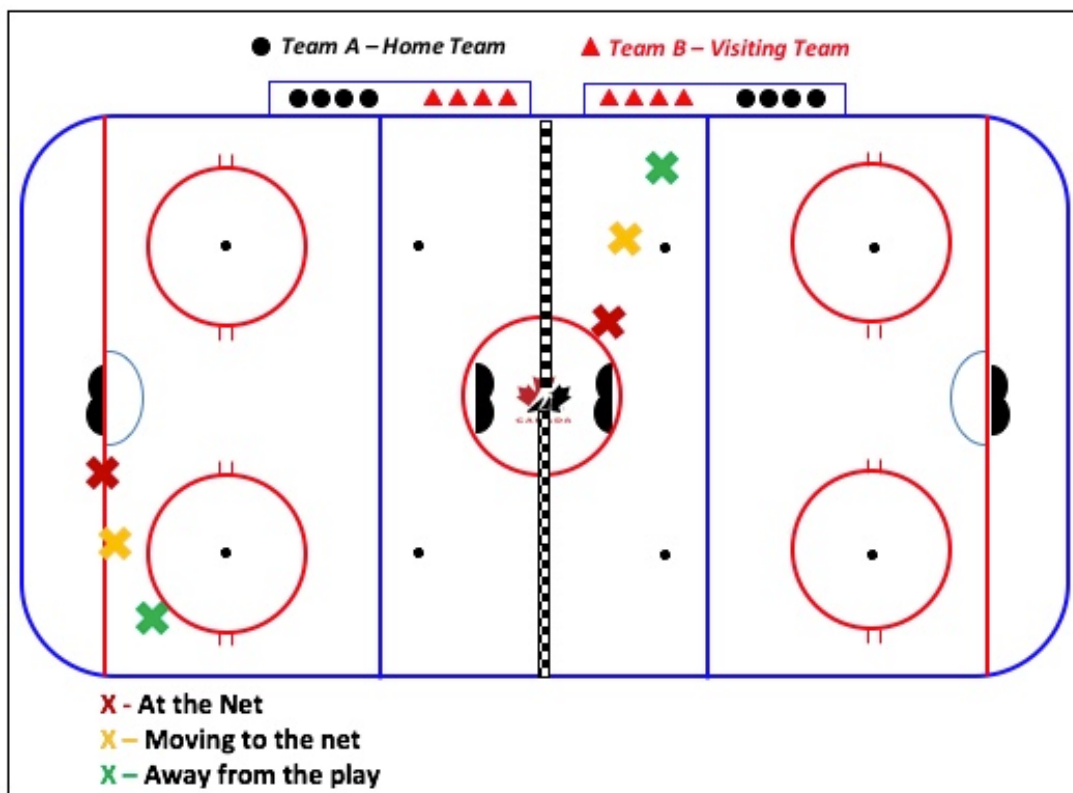


Figure 5: End-Zone Positioning of the Official



Section 5: ***Frequently Asked Questions***





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are the core requirements of the Initiation Cross-Ice Game Play Model?

The Initiation Cross-Ice Game Play Model was designed to maximize the opportunity to engage all players in the game. The core elements for this model are using running time, changing on the fly, no offside, no icing, no face-offs after goals and penalties are called.

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

The Initiation Game-Play Model is a 4 vs. 4 model (plus goaltenders) on cross-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, passing, receiving and shooting. Concepts like offside, icing, positional play and face-offs can be introduced at a later date when players move to the full-ice gameplay model which begins in Atom hockey.

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

The recommendation in the Initiation Game-Play Model is that all players have an opportunity to play goal. All players should rotate through the goaltender position throughout the season (there is no requirement for the player to have full goaltending equipment). The Hockey Canada Long-Term Player Development Model encourages a wide range of skill development at a young age, and focusing on a single position may limit the opportunity to practice skills in all areas.

4. Are Initiation cross-ice / half-ice games required to be two 25-minute halves?

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

5. Is the length of a shift in the Initiation Half-Ice Game Play Model limited to 60 seconds?

The shift length is only a recommendation. Shifts may be up to 90 seconds or two minutes in length. This is at the discretion of the Member. However, it is important to reference the core requirements of the game to ensure the spirit of the game is maintained.

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

Initiation teams are not permitted to play full-ice games. Members are responsible for setting the policy for game play for the entire season with the Initiation GamePlay Model and adhering to the Hockey Canada Policy. The Hockey Canada policy permits the transition to half-ice game play after January 15 for second-year Initiation players. Please reference the Initiation Seasonal Structure (pages 16-17) for information on the number of games permitted after January 15.



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

A jamboree is designed to engage players in a fun environment and is the coming together of several players who are then placed onto teams. Games may or may not be competitive and the emphasis is on fun and fair play.

A tournament is defined as a schedule of games played among three or more teams, which follows an interlocking schedule and leads to an eventual winner.

8. Are smaller nets required for the Initiation Cross-Ice Game format?

There is no requirement to use smaller nets for Initiation games. Regular nets (4x6) are a suitable option. However, small nets (3x4) are also acceptable and recommended.

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

Nets should be placed at the approximate midpoint from the boards or barriers on each side of the cross-ice playing surface. Net should be moved about a meter away from the boards to ensure there is enough room for players to go behind the nets. There is no need to draw crease markings in front of the nets.

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

Small spaces equate to more engagement in the play and more activity for young players. Through the small-area station-based practices and cross-ice games, players are closer 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 are doubled when the playing area is smaller. NHL analytics research has illustrated that all skill areas of the game increased substantially when players played in small spaces more suited to their age and skill level.

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

The average dimensions of a regular ice surface in Canada is 60 meters by 25 meters. The cross-ice playing surface can be a maximum of 30 meters by 25 meters if the dividers are placed at the centre-ice line. If the dividers are placed at the blue lines the width of the cross-ice playing area will be approximately 20 meters.

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

It is NOT a requirement to use a blue puck for Initiation hockey. The regulation black puck weighs six ounces, while the blue puck weighs four ounces. Scaling down all aspects of practice and game play for players eight and under is very beneficial. The blue puck is an appropriate weight in relation to the height and weight of these young players. Use of the blue puck can promote proper mechanics in shooting, passing and carrying the puck.



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13. Should Initiation players and/or Initiation teams be tiered?

Grouping of players of like ability can be a very important principle for setting young players up for success and enjoyment. The focus of the Initiation Game Play Model is player development. It is important in both station-based practices and in cross-ice game play that players be grouped by similar ability levels when possible or necessary.

It is recommended that prior to the start of the cross-ice game(s), coaches of opposing teams may wish to discuss possible line combinations to ensure that the skill level of the players on the ice is similar; this will allow more puck touches and fun for all the players participating.

14. Do the officials need to be fully registered?

This is at the discretion of the Member. It must be noted that the Initiation Game-Play Model provides an excellent opportunity to introduce officials to the game.

15. Do the officials have to wear the full officiating uniform?

If the Member elects to have officials work the Initiation Game-Play Model, all officials on the ice need to wear the minimum of an officiating jersey with Member crest, black pants and a black CSA-approved helmet with a CSA-approved half visor. Full officiating uniform is not required if coaches are officiating the games (helmet is mandatory).

16. Do the on-ice officiating shadows / mentors have to wear an officiating uniform?

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

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

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

18. What support is available for coaches at the Initiation level?

The NCCP Community Coach Stream – Coach 1 – Intro to Coach Clinic is designed for Initiation coaches who need to understand the proper instructional approach with children at this age.

The Community Coach Stream Coach 1 – Intro to Coach Clinic is part of the new online NCCP Coaching Clinic available through the online Hockey University.



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Recognizing the necessity to provide a positive experience for young hockey players, the Community Coach Stream – Coach 1 – Intro to Coach Clinic builds upon a number of values providing a qualitative experience, which include:

- Providing a safe environment in which to be introduced to fundamental skills.
- Developing an understanding of basic teamwork through participation in structured activities and adapted game-like situations.
- Introducing participants to the concepts of fair and cooperative play.
- Refining basic motor patterns and building self-confidence.
- Providing an environment that challenges individuals positively and rewards the participants for their efforts.
- Providing opportunities to experience a number of activities related in the building of a lifestyle of fitness and activity.

In addition to coach education, the Initiation Skills Manual is a set of ice-session plans that are designed for the age-appropriate and skill-specific needs of young Initiation players. These ice-session plans are available through the [Hockey Canada Network](#), [Drill Hub](#) and at [HockeyCanada.ca](#).

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

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

It will be important to work with facility management to ensure proper protocols are being followed. This will maximize efficiency, ensure safe practices for all and promote a harmonious relationship between the arena staff and members of the local minor hockey association.

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

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

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

OmniSport Inc.
14 Boulder Blvd.
Stony Plain, AB
T7Z 1V7
Telephone: (780) 968-2344
www.omnisport.ca

Athletica Sport Systems Inc.
554 Parkside Drive
Waterloo, ON
N2L 5Z4
Tel: (519) 747-1856
Toll-free: (877) 778-5911
www.athletica.com



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