

4 ORGANISATION & PLANNING

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4.1 *Practice Preparation and Planning*

You have a very comprehensive and complete set of practice plans, in the Learn to Play Practice Manual, to guide and assist you with your ice sessions. A certain amount of planning is necessary to ensure a successful practice. In order that 100% of your ice time is put to good use, and the objectives for each lesson are met, the following guidelines are provided:

- Objectives of the practice must be clear in your mind
- Make sure the content of the practice is appropriate for your players
- Review all the teaching points to ensure you are familiar with the practice
- Break skills down into the smallest possible parts
- Check the amount of time for each drill to be covered
- Keep explanations very brief
- Have a copy of the practice with you to refer to during the practice
- Make sure the necessary teaching aids are in place
- Explain to any assistant coaches their duties and the overall practice

Tips for a successful ice session

- Arrive early
- Greet all your players by name
- Be positive and in a good mood
- Put the players at ease by talking with them
- Start with a group activity to generate a feeling of togetherness
- Keep your starting activities fairly constant so as to set up a routine
- Progress from simple to difficult
- Use humour is a way of “breaking the ice” and building up coach/player relationships
- Identify improvement in your players’ performance and say something positive

On-ice Safety

During ice sessions you have a responsibility as a coach to be prevention minded about injuries. The following safety precautions should be observed:

- Have players learn how to fall
- Ensure players stop at least 1 meter feet from the boards when performing drills or skills
- Ensure properly fitting protective equipment is worn at all times
- The instructor should be wearing a helmet while on the ice
- Do not permit any “horse play”
- Care should be taken to ensure that shooting drills are conducted in as safe a manner as possible
- Remove any foreign materials from the ice immediately
- Ensure all doors to the ice surface are closed prior to players starting any drills

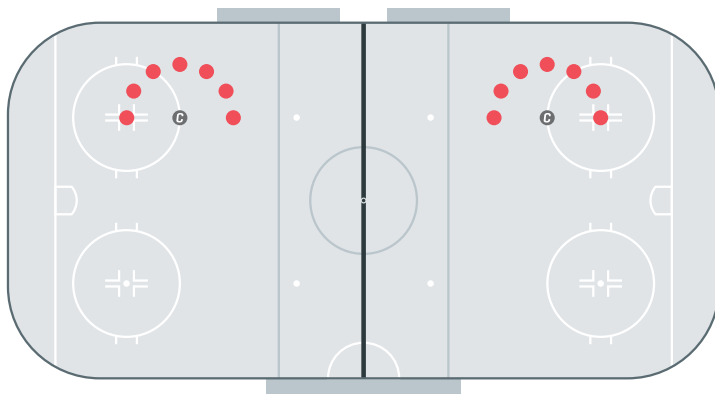
4.2 Teaching Stations

The most effective way to teach the basic skills of ice hockey is to divide your total group of players up into small manageable groups. The number of groups you use depends upon:

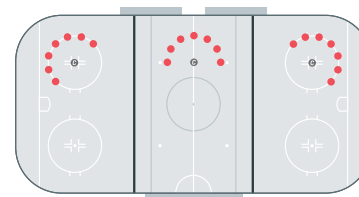
- Total number of players (try to divide them evenly)
- The different levels of skill of the players
- Number of assistant coaches you have working with you
- Amount of different skills you intend to teach
- The amount of ice available

The following diagrams are suggestions for dividing the ice into suitable areas for skills instruction, depending upon the number of groups you have. Use the blank forms to make up some of your own. In the diagrams, **C** is the coach and **●** is the players.

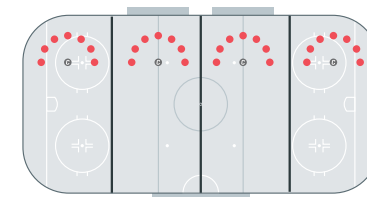
2 Groups



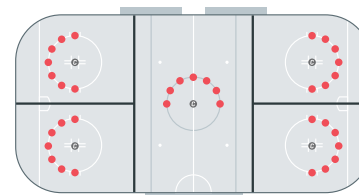
3 Groups



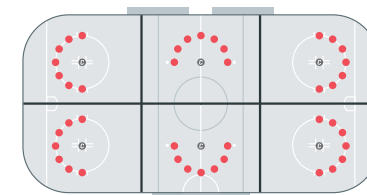
4 Groups



5 Groups



6 Groups



Once groups have been formed and the teaching stations established, there are a number of considerations:

- Players should face away from distractions i.e. spectators
- The coach must be visible to all players
- Coaches should maintain eye contact with the players
- Keep players stationary during explanations
- Explain 2–3 teaching points at the most
- Groups must allow for a quick and smooth transition to the drill
- All players and coaches know signals for movement from one station to the next

Ideally, the coach to pupil ratio should be kept as low as possible. A good ratio is 1:4 or 1:5; the maximum should be 1:8 or 1:10 for effective control and instruction.

Coaches must also guard against “bombarding” a player with feedback and corrections. Avoid having more than one coach giving help to the same player.

4.3 *Organisation of Equipment and Space*

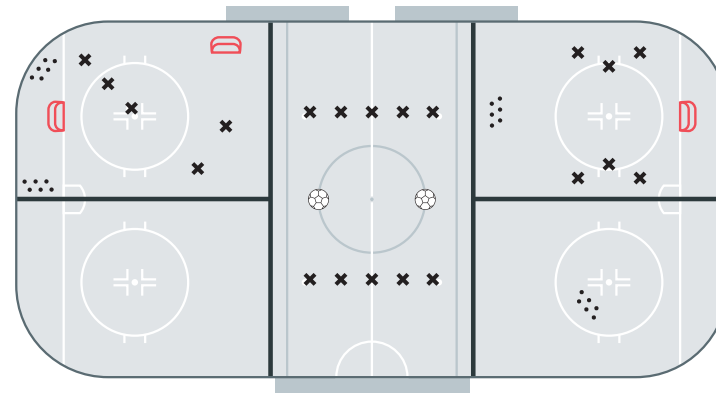
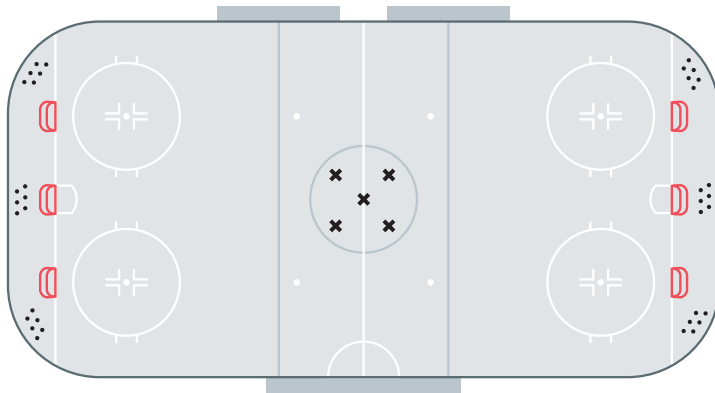
Two of the coach's most important resources are equipment and teaching aids. These tools make lessons more effective, more interesting and provide variety in teaching. Performances of some skills, particularly at the basic level for beginners, are virtually impossible to perform without equipment and the necessary teaching aids.

Teaching Tools

The following is an example of items you could have to aid your teaching:

- Small nets or goal insert
- Junior sized sticks
- Lightweight pucks
- Cross-ice rink boards
- Chairs
- Soccer ball & Tennis balls
- Pylons (large and small)
- Tape
- Clipboard
- Whistle
- Rink Board and Pen

The following diagrams are examples of effective pre-planning of equipment on the ice surface which will provide maximum use of ice for skills instruction:



x pylons ··· pucks ⚽ balls 🏑 net

Can you think of some alternate ideas of your own?

4.4 Points to Remember

Individual learning

- Use more assistants
- Teach in small groups
- Groups separated by age or skill

Use Off-ice

- Explanation of practice in the locker room
- Warm up and cool down off-ice

Use simple to complex exercises

- Exercises should be demanding in coordination aspects
- One exercise should develop a variety of skills

Use of time for recuperation

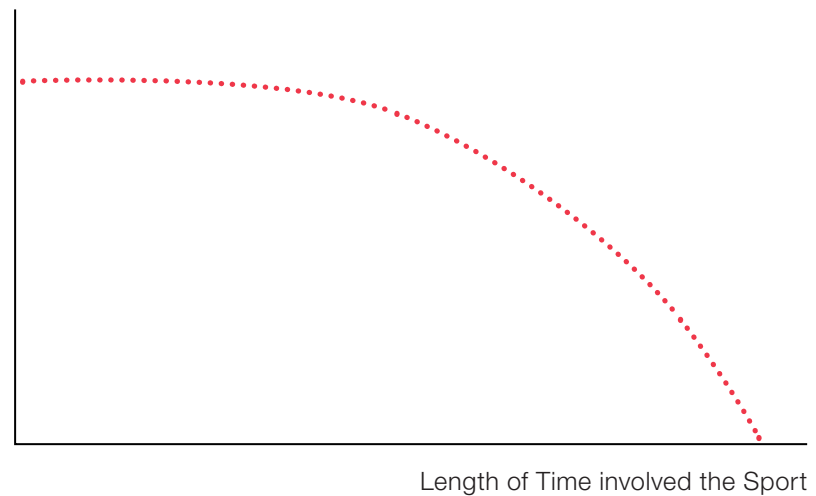
- Exercises with small requirements on energy sources
- Technical exercises
- Exercises that need a lot of repetition for perfection

Game playing during Practice

- Beginner players learn more by playing games
- Playful Games that are fun and non-competitive
- Increase number of set drills as player gets older

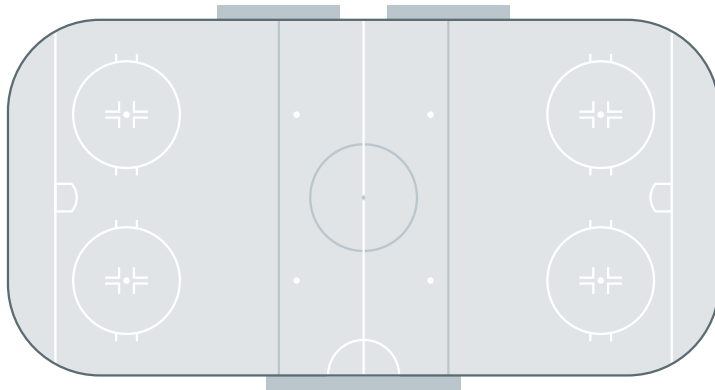
The following graph illustrates these points to remember

Play needed during a Practice

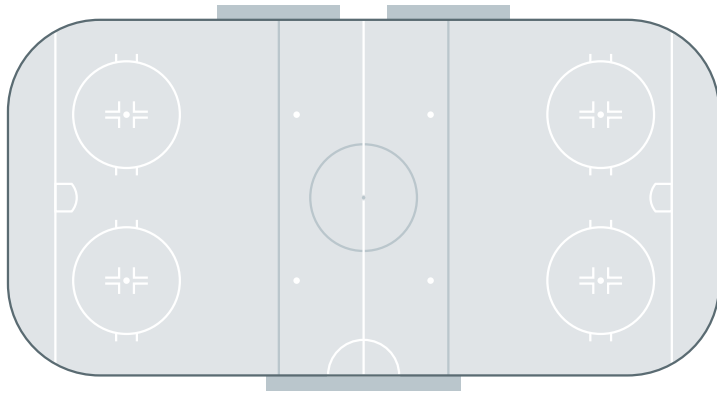


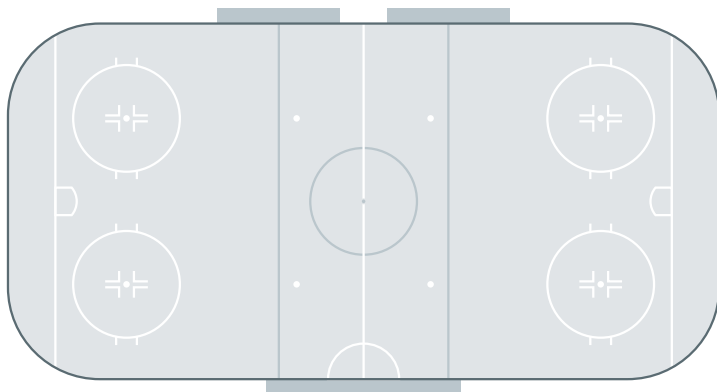
4.5 Exercises

A. Describe and diagram a system for dividing 35 players of the same age with slightly varying levels of ability into 5 groups for instruction purposes in Learn to Play Section “A”.



B. Describe and diagram two methods of dividing 32 players ranging in age from 5–9 and of varying ability from Learn to Play Program A–D who are on the ice together for a 50 minute period.





4.6 The Learn to Play Program

The game of ice hockey is a fast-paced, complex, team sport, which demands quick thinking, fast reactions and special athletic skills. It is a great game to watch, and an even better game to play. This enjoyment is experienced once a player steps on the ice and increases as they learn the basic skills necessary to play the game.

There is a learning process, which every player, no matter how gifted, must go through in order to learn the basic skills before being able to enjoy all of the excitement and the magic of playing ice hockey well.

The Learn to Play Program is the first step in the learning process. This is the most important step that introduces the beginner player to ice hockey and gives them their first exposure to the game. It is a well-organized step-by-step program that enables children to have fun and enjoy while learning the basics of the great game of ice hockey.

4.7 *Theory behind the Learn to Play Program*

The theory behind the Learn to Play Program is a very simple. If a youngster is introduced to the game in a positive, fun-filled manner, then, not only will they enjoy the initial experience, they will want to come back again and again. With this foundation they will continue to enjoy playing the game for many years.

Some of the best ice hockey minds from the leading ice hockey playing nations realised that there was a better way to learn how to play hockey than by just playing the game. They believed that by using very simple programs and practices, using cross-ice and playing fun games rather than competitive games, they would produce better results and the children would enjoy it more.

These experts worked to develop the Learn to Play Program based on these principles.

If children enjoy an experience from the very beginning they are much more likely to continue. If they learn by practicing cross-ice and learn the basic skills necessary to play the game in a fun, non-competitive atmosphere, then playing the game becomes more enjoyable. This is especially true as they began to experience the accomplishments of trying and succeeding.

The Learn to Play Program is the ideal way to introduce youngsters to ice hockey and a necessary first step to becoming a ice hockey player.

4.8 *Operating an Entry-Level Program*

The MNA must make the commitment to operate a Learn to Play Program and then be prepared to support it. This commitment involves making an educated decision to put the Learn to Play Program into practice and to have the courage to continue with it until it becomes a normalized method. This will only happen when the program is given enough time to begin producing players and coaches.

Coaches that work with entry-level players must not only understand how to teach these players as well as understand how the Learn to Play Program works and support its objectives.

This program is different from those that have been normally offered in the past, with learning being emphasized as opposed to playing in a competitive situation. While playing is not completely eliminated, there are bound to be doubters and those who favour a more traditional approach.

The MNA must realize this and be prepared to deal with critique, while not losing sight of the fact that the program has been designed for the children, not adults. Growing pains are normal in any new program and when both the participants and most of the instructors are likely to be inexperienced, the program implementation is not going to be as smooth as one would like. However, with commitment, patience and support the results will come and in most cases exceed everyone's expectations.

4.9 *4 Step Process for Growth of a Program*

First Step: Recruit

In many situations associations, clubs and teams (including coaches) need to be proactive in finding young people to become involved in ice hockey. If handled properly, this can be a great boost to the ice hockey program and the players participating in it.

A few examples include:

- Word of mouth
- Attend public skating sessions
- Free entrance to junior or pro games
- Articles on radio, television or papers

A positive story showing children having fun while learning is appealing and works well to reinforce the efforts of all involved – players, parents, and coaches.

Second Step: Sample

Once the youngsters have become interested in ice hockey it is very important to give them the opportunity to try the sport. This means them having a chance to play, practice, shoot pucks etc. Making it easy for them to get on the ice and experiencing ice hockey is a must. This is where an established Learn to Play program really helps.

Making equipment available for the players to use in the beginning makes participation safe for the players and inexpensive for their parents.

Third Step: Involved

This is the step where the player decides if they want to continue to be involved in ice hockey.

Practices should be based on the Learn to Play principles' of learning skills, playing for fun and playful games. Using the Practice Manual will help achieve this and offer the young player enjoyment every time they come to the rink.

A regular time slot for the practices will make it easier for the players and their families to make the commitment to be involved in the ice hockey program.

The cost of playing ice hockey can be very expensive so for the first-time player the amount that needs to be paid should be made as low as possible. The cost of registering should be made affordable for all families as should the amount paid for the weekly practice.

Fourth Step: Retain

Once the player is involved the challenge is to keep them coming back to play season after season. Continuing to make the program fun will ensure that the player is enjoying themselves and wants to continue to play. This can be done by offering a program that will improve the players progressively through the different levels of development and competition.

The amount and cost of equipment can be a big issue. There should be an attempt to make it easy for the player to participate, even with less equipment. This will depend on the nations legal guidelines for sports participation.

A good way to reduce the costs significantly for the parents of players becoming involved in ice hockey is to organize used equipment purchase, possibly from other players already playing.

Education for the parents on the goals of the Program and the child's development in ice hockey will help them understand the next stages that are ahead.

4.10 *Organizing a Learn to Play Jamboree/ Tournament*

The Learn to Play Program should be included as part of the overall program run by the local ice hockey club. There should be a season practice schedule that works progressively during the season.

Another enjoyable and exciting area that can be included in the schedule is to organize a cross-ice tournament or Jamboree and even host a group of visiting players. These tournaments are meant to be fun, non-competitive and enjoyable for everyone involved.

The key to this day is paying attention to the details, of which there are many. It should be noted that first impressions are lasting, so it is very important to the Program over-all that these events happen without any major problems to give everyone a favorable first impression.

Before

The ice should be booked and scheduled well in advance of the date. Any amount of ice-time is good as the format of the tournament is flexible and can be adjusted to suit the time available.

The equipment needed for a tournament are the same as in practices; small goals or inserts to go in the goals, ice dividers and lightweight pucks.

If other clubs and teams are being invited to attend the tournament, they should be contacted and advised of the details of the day. Visiting clubs can send more than just one team if they have the number of players as everyone should be welcome at this event.

On the Day

Arrange sufficient number of dressing rooms or dressing areas to accommodate all players that will be playing during the tournament.

A schedule and game format should be organized and posted to ensure all the participants understand how the day will be run. See below for a sample format that could be used.

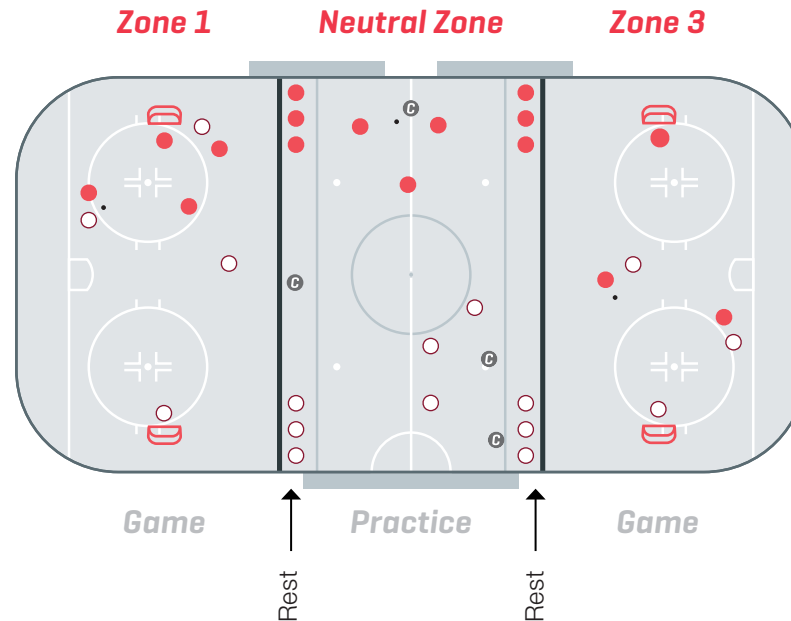
Make certain that the on-ice instructors are available and ready to go, as a minimum of 3 coaches are needed on the ice during the jamboree; 2 to officiate the two games and 1 to organize the practice in the neutral zone. It is suggested that all coaches that participate on ice, with managers or adult helpers controlling the resting/bench area. This makes it easier to organize the on-ice activities and player rotation.

No penalties should be called but coaches must know the rules and be proactive to stop situations from getting out of hand. For rules used for a jamboree refer to The Playing Rules for Players under 10 Years Old chapter of this manual.

A practice plan should be developed for the neutral zone so that the coaches can start immediately once the players move into the zone. Drills from the Practice Manual can be used.

Game Day Format

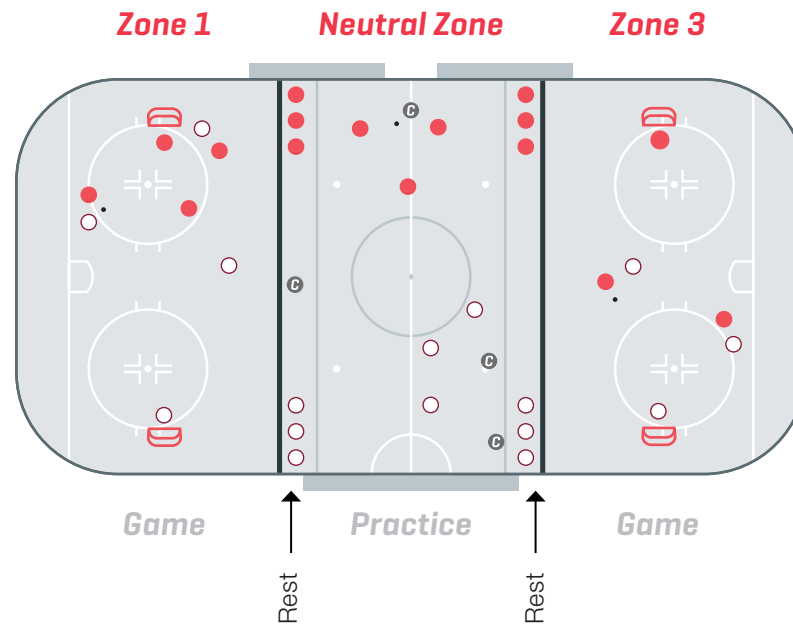
	<u>Zone 1</u>	<u>Neutral Zone</u>	<u>Zone 3</u>
Game 1	1 v 2	Skating	3 v 4
Game 2	1 v 4	Puck Handling	2 v 3
Game 3	1 v 3	Passing	2 v 4



1. Have a quick 5 minute warm-up in the zone where the teams are playing.
2. Players rotation is Game-Practice-Rest.
3. Group your players by ability and try to match lines – best against best, etc ... star111rst game with you111rst group ... It's not easy but give it a try.
4. Play 4 v 4 plus a skater as goalie, if possible. Be flexible – if rotation works better to play 3 v 3, you can combine i.e. 4 v 4 one shift, 3 v 3 the second shift if it makes rotations even can even play 5 v 4 or 4 v 3 if it makes your teams' rotation smoother ...
5. 25 minute games ... blow horn every 90 seconds ... clock continues to run while players line up.

Game Day Format

	<u>Zone 1</u>	<u>Neutral Zone</u>	<u>Zone 3</u>
Game 1	1 v 2	Skating	3 v 4
Game 2	1 v 4	Puck Handling	2 v 3
Game 3	1 v 3	Passing	2 v 4



6. Face-offs to start each shift ... very quickly ... don't worry about all players being lined-up perfectly ... drop the puck and get play going.
7. Face-offs to side if goalie covers puck ... very quickly ... don't worry about all players being lined-up perfectly ... drop the puck and get play going.
8. Face-offs after each goal ... very quickly ... same thing ... drop the puck and get the play going quickly.
9. Coaches running the games should have several pucks in their pockets ... idea is to drop the puck quickly.

The Outcome

All the principles of the Learn to Play Program are fulfilled in one event.

- Maximum ice usage
- Increased activity time for all the players
- Technical skills are taught, practiced, learned and used in games
- Players get to play the game
- Coaches learn to teach
- Everyone is involved
- Fun for all participants

***Learn to Play Program
is based on:***

- Learning Skills***
- Playing for Fun***
- Fun Games***