TEACHING SKILLS
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Being a teacher is one of the main roles a coach fulfills for their players. The ability to teach effectively, especially the technical skills of ice hockey, is very important for the development of the players and their enjoyment of the game.

The player needs to:

- Have fun and enjoy hockey
- Be involved in activities that are challenging and ongoing
- Receive reinforcement from coach
- Experience success to build positive self-esteem
- Play in unstructured activities
- Have adapted game situations
- Be introduced to the concepts of cooperation and sportsmanship
- Increase physical development
- Refine basic motor patterns

Understanding these facts the coach must teach and organize practices that are specific to the needs of their players and their team.
Ice Hockey

The playing skills of Ice Hockey can be divided in two parts: Technical Skills and Hockey Sense. The coach needs to concentrate on both of these skill areas to help their players develop into complete players.

What are the Technical Skills of Ice Hockey?

At the most basic level the skills of ice hockey can be broken down into two categories that include all the technical skills of the game.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offensive</th>
<th>Defensive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skating</td>
<td>Skating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puck Handling</td>
<td>Stick checking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passing &amp; Receiving</td>
<td>Body checking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shooting</td>
<td>Blocking shots</td>
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<td>Fakes</td>
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<td>Screening</td>
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How are these Skills Taught?

Teaching Progressions

There are four sections in the Learn to Play Practice manual, each with 20 practices. These practices have been developed to assist you the running of this program. They have been designed within the context of the teaching progressions described in this chapter.

Learning is enhanced if it progresses from material that is: known to unknown – simple to complex. This material can be taught by progressively adding other elements in the teaching process; for example Stationary-Movement-Game.
Teaching physical skills and technique involves a chain of events. There are four main links in this chain:

Link 1: Select a basic skill to be learned - identify what you want them to learn

Link 2: Plan the explanation and demonstration - determine what to say and how to say it

Link 3: Plan how the players will practice the skill

Link 4: Provide feedback during practice - make constructive corrections and help the players maintain realistic goals

First link: Select the basic skill to be learned

Basic skills are not always simple to learn. For example the basic skill in ice hockey is skating but it is actually a complex skill to learn.

EXERCISE: Basic Skills

What skills do you feel should be emphasized in the Learn to Play Program? In the columns below,

- Choose the most important basic skills
- Identify the order in which you think they should be taught
- Identify how they could be learned - alone or in combination with others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Order Taught</th>
<th>How Taught - alone, pairs, 3+</th>
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Now, compare your list with the suggested progressions in the Practice Manual. When you are teaching it is important that your list is at similar to the sequence recommended in the manuals.

The Learn to Play Coach has been provided with a set of practice plans that progresses gradually and systematically through the skills to be learned in the program, beginning with the most basic and progressing to the more complicated skills.

Second Link: Plan the Explanation and Demonstration

This is the planning you do to organize what you want to teach. Although much of this has been done for you in the lesson plans, it is important you understand the sequence of events to follow in conducting a lesson.
This link contains seven steps:

**STEP 1 - Select a skill and write down why it is important**

Name the skill explain briefly how, when and why the skill is used in ice hockey. Total time for the demonstration should be of 30-45 seconds duration.

**STEP 2 - Select main teaching points to emphasize**

With your participants being young and inexperienced, select only one or two teaching points and keep these as simple as possible.

Use short, descriptive key words or phrases to highlight the teaching points during the demonstration. Don't overload the player with too much information at the same time.

**STEP 3 - Decide if an aid would help**

An aid is a chart, diagram, picture or videotape. Remember your participants are young and inexperienced, so an aid must be useful and understandable to the players. Good aids are most useful if they are posted on a wall or bulletin board so players can refer to them after the skill has been taught.

**STEP 4 - Select an effective formation**

Consider the number of learners present and decide what formation to put them in where all will be able to see and hear clearly.

**SEMI CIRCLE**

```
 X
X X
X X
 C
```

**OPEN SQUARE**

```
X X X X X
X   X
X   X
 C
```

For this age group, the most effective formation is a semi-circle or open square with all players kneeling down. This eliminates most extra movement and focuses attention on the Coach. The players should be placed so they face away from any distractions.

**STEP 5 - Decide on what view or views players should see**

Check out the best angles for viewing the demonstration. Plan to repeat the demonstration as many times as necessary rotating 90° or 180°each time to ensure that all players see it from all possible angles. Total time for the demonstration and explanation should be no more than 45 seconds from beginning to end.
STEP 6 - Decide on who demonstrates

Coaches should demonstrate a skill several times themselves and then ask a player to demonstrate it under their guidance. Use an ordinary member of the group as most players identify with average performers and learn best from them.

Being asked to demonstrate is rewarding and many members of the group should be called on to do it. However, remember some individuals do not like to get up in front of their peers to demonstrate.

STEP 7 - Ask for questions

To make sure that players understand, ask if they have any questions. Answer all questions with respect, even if they have been covered during the demonstrations. Beginners find sport skills difficult if they don't know exactly what it is supposed to look like. Check to see that what you describe is what they think they are trying to do it.

Third Link: Plan how the players will practice the skill

This link in the teaching chain is organizing a group to practice a skill that has been demonstrated. This is quite separate and distinct from planning and organizing the demonstration. The following steps will help you to plan effectively:

STEP 1 – Review the practice environment

Answer the following questions as a basis for your planning.

- How many players are there?
- How much area is there available to work in?
- How much equipment is available?

STEP 2 - Maximize activity

The object is to use as much of the space with as little waiting time as possible.

The following questions will help in planning the practice activity.

- Is it best to start participants working alone, in pairs or in small groups?
- Do players need to be moving or can they practice in one place? If they are moving will be enough clear area to move in?
- How can you make the groups as small and active as possible?

Some breaks in activity can be constructive - here are a few reasons:

- Time to rest in vigorous practices
- When space available is too small for all to be active
- When the amount of equipment is limited and it is not safe
- To correct, re-teach or give further instruction
STEP 3 - Use clear, precise instructions

- Explain simply what is to be done
- Use simple key words or key phrases to explain the main points of instruction
- Carefully point out any special safety precautions
- Always pause to see that your explanations have been heard and understood – watch the players faces

STEP 4 - Move players into practice activity quickly

- The formation used to observe the demonstration should allow
- If groups are used regularly, players should be assigned to specific groups
- The instructor must take care to maintain control of players between the end of the demonstration and the beginning of the drill
- Plan a simple, efficient method of distributing equipment if that is necessary.

STEP 5 - Check and correct the practice pattern first, then check technique

When practice begins, your attention should be on the pattern of activity.

- Are groups spaced properly
- Do have enough room?
- Are the players doing what you asked them to?
- Are safety precautions being observed?

If any of these things need attention, correct them immediately.

Once the practice pattern is well established; then begin to check technique and details of the skill as players perform. This is an extremely important point. Stand or move around so you can see the whole group.

Fourth Link: Provide feedback during practice

Feedback during learning involves feeding back information to the players about their efforts to learn. It serves three important functions in learning:

1. to guide improvement
2. to measure progress
3. to provide encouragement

1. Give feedback to guide improvement

Learning skills can be very confusing; there are many things to think about. The player needs to know what they are doing correctly so they can concentrate on the parts of the skill they need to improve. This is one of principles of skill development.

If players are not clear on what parts of the skill are being done correctly they may change these for the worse as they try to correct other parts of the skill.
2. **Use feedback as a measure of progress**

   If a player knows that their list of questions about how to do a skill is getting shorter it will be easy for them to recognize improvement. Further evidence of an improved skill level can be measured. If a player can pass the puck accurately and hit a small target the athlete has a tangible evidence of improvement.

3. **Use feedback to provide encouragement**

   While knowledge of improvement rewards us, so does approval and recognition, words of praise from people important to us, family members, friends and, in ice hockey the coach in particular.

   Criticism is the opposite of praise, unless constructive. It should only be used to stop dangerous or undesirable behavior and to replace it with acceptable behavior. Physical punishment is never acceptable, nor is extra, strenuous, physical work an advisable form of punishment.

**Teaching Approaches**

There are three approaches commonly used in teaching simple skills:

1. **Imitation**

2. **DEPC**

3. **Learn Through Playing**

1. **Imitation Method**

   Simple imitation is often the best way for players to learn. It requires them to focus on what is to be imitated or copied. "Watch this ... Try it". Often the imitation is as accurate as it needs to be. You should then confirm it: "$\text{Yes. That's it. Now remember that.}$" If necessary, have it practiced several times.

   When minor corrections are required point them out in a clear, matter-of-fact way. If players have trouble picking up the correct action or movement then you should realize that, for some reason, it is not as simple as expected.

2. **Demonstration/Explanation/Practice/ Correction Method**

   This method is used extensively. It involves these steps:

   - Have a Demonstration first with minimal explanation
   - Allow the players to practice. Observe carefully
   - Provide feedback while practice continues if possible. If you must; stop practice, confirm correct actions and correct errors
   - Allow for more practice and correct in more detail
3. Learn through Playing

"Always remember these words: LEARNING IS MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN IT IS FUN!"

One of the biggest threats for the development of ice hockey is that players are forced to play with a system too early in their development. At an early age playing has to be fun while learning a wide range of skills. A young player playing in a system too early may get stuck in one position for their whole career and his full potential may not be realised.

Too much emphasis and importance is placed on winning too early in a player's development. This means they are not able to make mistakes and that blocks learning! When developing the skills of ice hockey it should be done with the theme "learning by playing". To accomplish this, the Learn to Play Program uses different types of games.

The games the players learn with are:

A. Playful games → accustoming and accepting the games  
B. Applied games → playing according to agreed rules and restrictions

Factors affecting Learning

The factors which affect the way in which an individual learns skills, can be viewed from a variety of different perspectives. The main ones are:

1. The Learning Environment  
2. Coach traits  
3. Other factors which influence learning

1. The Learning Environment:

a. Should be completely under the control of the coach  
b. There should be reward for success given at every opportunity  
c. Encouragement must be provided to assist in the improvement of skills  
d. Focus on the players’ ability not their personality  
e. Focus on the correction of errors; Correct major errors at once  
f. Provide free time to experiment with new skills in self-teaching mode  
g. Factors which often inhibit learning:
   (1) Excessive enthusiasm  
   (2) Negative attitude  
   (3) Poor equipment  
   (4) Poor teaching tools
2. **Coach Qualities:**

These qualities are familiar and are covered in the Coach section:

   a. Knowledge of the game, the components of the basic skills and how and when to introduce them.
   b. Be able to express their knowledge at the players' level of ability and in a manner which will motivate and challenge them.
   c. Relating to the players in a friendly, courteous and respectful manner
   d. Ability to identify learning limits, skill level and level of interest of the players
   e. Ability to judge the level of tolerance of the players so learning demand does not exceed what they can handle
   f. Be prepared, creative and enthusiastic.

3. **Other Factors:**

   a. Guide and monitor the learning process; be aware of progressions in learning
   b. New skills should be introduced on a solid basis; they should be built on previous practices and should be emphasized until mastered.
   c. Ice sessions should be planned around the level of ability and interest of the players, their ability to understand instructions and their attention span
   d. Repeat drills for short periods of time over a large number of ice sessions