Practice Manual
Introduction
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Foreword
by René Fasel, IIHF President

The International Ice Hockey Federation is pleased to welcome you to the Learn to Play Program. Since its inception in 2000 the Learn to Play Program has quickly become a popular and successful program in many nations around the world for introducing beginner players to the joys of ice hockey.

The goal of this program is to teach children, primarily between the ages of 6 and 9 years old, the basic ice hockey skills by creating a fun and enjoyable environment for them to learn.

The Learn to Play Program is also aimed at the education of program instructors and coaches who will be important in the successful implementation of the program around the world.

The IIHF is pleased to provide this program for the worldwide development of ice hockey. We trust that member National Associations will use the program to introduce entry-level players into our sport and teach them these skills that can last a lifetime.

On behalf of the International Ice Hockey Federation, I would like to extend our appreciation to the many volunteers who offered their time and energy to prepare this educational resource for our youngest athletes and their coaches.

Coaches, have fun and enjoy the experience of teaching the children that will be the future of ice hockey.

Sincerely,

René Fasel
IIHF President
Introduction

The main objective of the IIHF Learn to Play Program is to give 6 to 9 year old boys and girls the ultimate hockey experience. Hockey at this level should be based on having fun, participation by all, and being taught basic hockey skills. This program is based on these ideals.

The Practice Manuals is comprised of four levels; A, B, C and D. The Practice Manuals are for coaches that have completed the Introduction to Coaching Level of the IIHF Coaching Program where they receive instruction in Leadership, Teaching Skills, Practice Organisation and practical on-ice instruction. The coaches receive an Introduction to Coaching Manual at this seminar which they can then use as a reference to help implement the Practice Manuals.

Each of the four levels contain 20 suggested practice plans to teach beginning hockey players the basic skills in an organised and progression. The first 15 practices in each level are very detailed and the five remaining practices are in outline form so that the coach can further develop their practice planning technique and organisational skills.

The IIHF Learn to Play Program is based on a model of practicing and playing cross-ice. “Why cross-ice”, you may ask, “I want my child playing on the big ice surface like the adults do”.

That is the point, children are not adults, they learn differently than adults, and they see the world differently than adults do. This cross-ice practicing and playing model has been used in many of the leading hockey nations in the world for a number of years and has stood the test of time. It has shown that children who begin their hockey training in this environment have an outstanding hockey experience. (See the Advantages of Cross-Ice Practicing and Playing on page 9.)

Playing Rules for Children Under 10 Years Old, which have also been tested and developed over time in many countries around the world, are included on page 11. These rules enable the children to develop hockey skills in an environment that fosters fun, learning, participation by all, and mental and physical development.
Practice Manual Format

The four Levels of the practice manual, A, B, C, and D, are formatted in a similar style. The components are laid out in a progressive order to help the LTP coach prepare for and operate an efficient practice. The four components of a lesson are:

1. Specific Objectives
2. Key Instructional Points
3. Teaching Tools Needed
4. Practice Plan

The Practice Plans are intended as worksheets for the LTP coach to write on while preparing the practice. Once the practice is prepared the LTP coach should put the Practice Plan in a plastic cover, take it onto the ice and hang it on the boards for quick reference during the practice.

In the practices you will find drawings, silhouettes of these drawings and ice diagrams which illustrate and explain the desired skills and drills which are covered in the test. When a skill or technique illustration appears in the manual for the first time it is in the form of a line drawing.

When the same drawing is used again it will be in silhouette form which indicates that if you go back earlier in the manual you will find either teaching points or drills using this same technique.

On the last page of each section is a Skills Checklist to help the coach to determine if the players have successfully carry out the skills in that Level and ready to advance move on to next.

Descriptions of the components of a typical practice plan are illustrated on the following pages.
LEARN TO PLAY PROGRAM

Plan Identification
A = Level A
1 = Practice #1

Key Instructional Points
• Provide the Leader with Key Points for giving clear teaching instructions.
• Take your Key Points from here and write them onto your lesson plan.
• If needed, take this page onto the ice for support.

Specific Objectives
• New skills that are to be taught in this lesson are introduced here!
• Skills that are being repeated will be reviewed in the objectives.
• In some lessons, the objective will be to refine certain skills.

Specific Objectives
1. Chance to practice gripping blades and edges.
2. Practice edges short.

Specific Objectives
3. Practice edges long.
4. Practice edges short.

Key Instructional Points
• Provide the Leader with Key Points for giving clear teaching instructions.
• Take your Key Points from here and write them onto your lesson plan.
• If needed, take this page onto the ice for support.

Key Instructional Points
• Provide the Leader with Key Points for giving clear teaching instructions.
• Take your Key Points from here and write them onto your lesson plan.
• If needed, take this page onto the ice for support.

Teaching Tools Needed
• These are the teaching tools that the Leader will need to prepare for this lesson.
• Remember, the children appreciate when the Leader is prepared.
• Add your own teaching tools to the list.
Key Points
- Add your own Key Instructional Points or notes here:
  - bend knees
  - head up
  - keep it fun
  - good communication

Teaching Tools
- Use the teaching tools which are listed and enhance with your own ideas.

Organisational Information
- Add your specific information here.

Skill
- The skill or activity that will be used will be illustrated here.

Filled-In Illustration
- This illustration, which is filled-in, indicates that this skill or technique has been used earlier in the manual.

Description
- A detailed description of the skill or activity that will be used is given here to help the Leader in giving instructions to the children.
### LESSON PLAN A-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follow and Slide Training</td>
<td>(details)</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance and Agility Development</td>
<td>(details)</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name Zhao</td>
<td>(details)</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Skills</td>
<td>(details)</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**
- After practice, this section is to be completed by the Leader.
- What successes did we have today?
- In which areas do we need more improvement?
- What needs to be reviewed or refined?

**Illustration**
- This illustration, with no fill-in, indicates that this is the first time that this skill or technique is used in the manual.

**Time**
- Recommended times for each activity are given here.
- Adjust the time according to your situational needs.
## Outline of Skills

Listed in the tables below are the skills covered in the IIHF Learn to Play Practice Manuals.

### Level A

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Balance/Agility</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>V-stop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How to get up</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Puckhandling stance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Proper stance</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Stationary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>T-push</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Skating with puck</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gliding on 2-skates</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Open ice carry</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gliding on 1-skate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Starting with puck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Scooting</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Weaving with puck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Glide turns</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Forehand sweep pass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Stops One/Eleven o'clock</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Receiving pass forward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Moving sideways</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Backhand sweep pass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Striding</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Receiving pass back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Backward stance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Skating and passing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Walking backwards</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Forehand sweep shot</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Gliding backwards</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>C-cut</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Skating and shooting</td>
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</table>

### Level B

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<td>Gliding 2-skates</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Backward 1-foot stop and T-push</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gliding 1-skate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Backward push &amp; glide/backward striding</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Scooting</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Pivot, backwards to forward</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Scooting on circles</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Pivot, forward to backwards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Glide turns</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Tight turns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Stopping (11 &amp; 1 o'clock)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Open ice carry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sideways movement</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Starting with puck</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Push and glide(forward striding)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Weaving with puck</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Front V-start</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Use of feet to control puck</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Edge control</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Puckhandling combinations</td>
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<td>Stationary puckhandling</td>
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<td>Stationary passing (forehand/backhand)</td>
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<td>Two-foot stop</td>
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<td>Skating and passing</td>
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<td>C-cut</td>
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<td>Lead pass to moving target</td>
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<td>V-stop</td>
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<td>Bank pass to partner</td>
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<td>Reversing direction and T-push</td>
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<td>Forehand sweep shot</td>
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<td>Skating and shooting</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Backhand sweep shot</td>
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<td>Use of wrists in shooting</td>
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### Level C

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<td>Reversing direction (2-foot stop &amp; T-push)</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>One-foot stop (front foot)</td>
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<td>Pivot forward -backwards</td>
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<td>Front start</td>
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<td>Crossover front start</td>
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<td>Lateral crosses</td>
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<td>Use feet in puckhandling</td>
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<td>Pass to moving target</td>
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<td>C-cuts</td>
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<td>Bank pass</td>
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<td>V-stop</td>
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<td>Backward crossover start</td>
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<td>Glide turns</td>
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<td>Skating and shooting</td>
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<td>Flip pass</td>
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<td>Backward push and glide</td>
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<td>Skating with puck</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Skating Fake</td>
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### Level D

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<td>Stationary pass/receive</td>
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<td>Bank pass</td>
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<td>Edge control</td>
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<td>Use of feet in puckhandling</td>
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<td>One-foot stop outside edge</td>
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<td>C-cuts</td>
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<td>Two-foot stop and crossover</td>
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<td>Skating with puck</td>
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<td>Flip pass</td>
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<td>V-stop</td>
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<td>Pivots (both)</td>
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<td>Flip shot</td>
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<td>Backward 1-foot stop</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Moving to open space</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Weaving with puck</td>
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<td>Backward lateral crossovers</td>
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<td>Open ice carry</td>
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<td>Backhand Flip shot</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Backward push and glide</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Receive, skate shoot</td>
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Advantages of Cross-Ice Practicing and Playing

The IIHF Learn to Play Program is based on a model of practicing and playing hockey across the width of the ice surface, instead of along the full length of the ice surface. This cross-ice practicing and playing model has been used in many of the leading hockey nations in the world for a number of years and has stood the test of time. It has been shown that children who begin their ice hockey training in this environment have an outstanding hockey experience.

Parents may ask the question “Why should my child play cross-ice, what will they learn?” and say “I want my child playing on full-ice like the professionals do.” That is the point, children are not adults, they see the world differently and learn in a different way than adults do.

Let’s think about a child trying to skate with a puck from one end of the rink to the other.

1. How long will this take? How much energy will this require?
2. In which situation will the child be more involved in a game? In the close space of the smaller cross-ice surface or the wide-open area of the full-ice surface?

A study of hockey games played on the full-ice surface by George Kingston found:

- In a sixty minute running time hockey game between 6-8 year old children, the average player had possession of the puck for 20.7 seconds
- Top professional players were also timed and no player exceeded 85 seconds of puck possession time
- Youth players had an average of less than 0.5 shots per game and professional players only 1.5 shots
- In a sixty-minute children’s game the actual playing time of the game was 20 minutes and 38 seconds
- Individual players are on the ice every third or fourth shift results in even less ice time

The study concluded that:

- For young players in the “full-ice game model” of development, the youngest players would require between 180 games to have 60 minutes of actual puck possession time to execute their stick handling, passing, pass receiving and shooting skills
- Professional players would require 60 games to ensure 60 minutes of puck control skill development
- Many young players never touched the puck during the game
LEARN TO PLAY PROGRAM

PRACTICING

- Children have more energy with which they can improve their skills when they are skating 30 meters across the ice surface instead of 60-meter length of the ice surface.
- Group sizes become smaller this means learning and teaching become more effective.
- Drills designed according to the varying skill levels of players within the group are easier to organise.
- More puck contact resulting in improved puck control skills.
- More repetition/frequency in drills in one ice session.
- Decision-making skills are enhanced.
- More decisions must be made more frequently at a higher tempo.

PLAYING

- Increased puck possession time for each player.
- Individual technical skills develop more quickly.
- More ice time for each player.
- Children remain active between their shifts with various activities in the neutral zone.
- Each player's activity increases greatly.
- Scoring skills are enhanced since the players have more shooting opportunities.
- The goalkeeper's reading of the game and reaction to changing game situations becomes more effective.
- More repetition for goalkeepers.
- The game is full of continuously changing situations.
- The speed in playing situations increases, which will require quicker mental and physical reactions by the players.
- Due to increased tempo, all of the team members take part in solving the playing situations, which leads to a sharing of responsibilities between the players.
- Hockey sense, or understanding the principles of the game, is being developed.
- There are no unnecessary breaks in the game.

GENERAL ORGANISATION

- More efficient use of ice time and space.
- The size of the rink is in proportion with the size of the players.
- The child sized goal nets are in proportion with the size of players.
- The middle zone is available for other purposes (player's bench, warm-up area, skill competition) while games are played in the end zones.
- The IIHF recommends that teams play with two or three units of four or five players and one goalkeeper which results in each player having more ice time.
- More ice time for practicing and playing is available to more teams within a single club.
- Many teams can practice together by sharing the ice surface.

GENERAL SPIRIT OF PARTICIPATION AND FUN

- More children get a chance to play ice hockey.
- More children will experience a feeling of success when playing hockey.
- The same exciting and fun environment is created.
- Both more and less gifted children will benefit from close/tight action on the ice.
- Children are excited and motivated to continue playing hockey.
- Hockey will be more appealing and enjoyable to a wider range of children and their parents.
The Playing Rules

Playing Rules for Children Under 10 Years Old, which have been tested and developed over time in many countries around the world, have been included in this manual to support you in organising games for the children. These rules enable the children to develop hockey skills in an environment that fosters fun, learning, participation by all, and mental and physical development.

The Playing Rules for Children Under 10 Years Old

Cross-Ice Playing Surface, Cross-Ice Rink Boards, and Child Sized Goal Nets

Cross-Ice Playing Surface

All games will be played across the ice in the end zones on one-third of the rink.

Cross-Ice Rink Boards

The IIHF recommends that every arena construct a light board barrier which:

- is easy and quick to move on and off the ice surface,
- is approximately 10 cm high and 5 cm wide,
- has no support legs to hinder the puck from sliding along the boards,
- forms a continuous barrier from the boards one side of the rink to the opposite side,
- uses some form of mechanism to easily hook the boards together,
- is constructed of, for example, wood, aluminium, fibreglass, or an old fire hose.

To keep the puck in play it is recommended that a "corner board" be constructed. The "corner board" constructions should be the same height and width as the boards which run along the blue line. An example of the light board barrier construction is shown in diagrams 1 and 2.
Child Sized Goal Nets

It is recommended that Learn to Play Goal Nets be used to give the goalkeeper a greater chance of success, which will in turn build confidence.

The goals should be located one meter from the sideboards of the rink and halfway between the end boards of the rink and the cross-ice rink boards set up on the blue line.

Two Learn to Play Goal Net construction examples are provided below.

Lightweight Goal Nets

Lightweight goals, measuring 90 cm high, 130 cm wide and 70 cm deep can be used, contracted of 1.5 to 2.0 cm tubing. The lower end of the goal posts should have small pegs to keep the goal in position. (see diagram 3 and 4)
Goal Insert

These lightweight goal inserts could be constructed using wood or plastic. The inserts should be made to fit inside the posts of a normal goal net. The insert should have an opening 90 cm high and 130 cm wide. The insert can be fastened to the goal posts and cross bar using straps or hooks. (diagram 5 and 6)
Equipment

Remember that the children being taught are small and in order for them to achieve maximum enjoyment and optimise their understanding of the skills, junior sized equipment should be used.

Junior Size Sticks

All players are encouraged to use junior sized sticks. Some benefits of using junior size sticks are:
- they enable better puck control
- they are lighter, and therefore improve balance
- they are less expensive than senior sticks

Lightweight Pucks

The overall diameter, thickness of the puck should be the same as a normal game puck (minimum weight is 80 grams and maximum is 130 grams). Options for lightweight pucks are outlined below.

Blue Puck
- This is a normal size puck, blue in colour, which is made of a lightweight material.

Puck with a hole
- This is a normal puck that has a 50 mm diameter hole in the centre.

Tip: If there is a lot of snow on the ice, wrap a few rounds of plastic tape around the puck to keep the snow out of the centre of the puck to ensure that the puck slides easily on the ice surface.

Game Organisation

Statistics

No statistics or league standings are to be recorded; however, a game sheet must be filled out so that the federation has a record that the game took place. Scores are not shown on the game time clock.

Game Officials

Either a coach or referee will act as to the game official for the game.

Off-Ice Officials

The home team should arrange for a timekeeper.

Face-offs

Face-offs will take place in the centre of the playing surface at the beginning of the game and the period, as well as after a goal, after a break in the play (when the goalkeeper freezes the puck), or when changing the players.
Playing Time
The length of the game is to be determined by the amount of time available.

Player Participation
All the players participating must be played evenly in every game.

Shift Changes
At the signal from the timekeeper, at a maximum of 90 seconds running time, the units will change. The units will always play at even strength (5 - 5, 4 -4).

Length of the playing shifts
The maximum length of the shift is 90 seconds running time

Offside and Icing
There are no blue line offside, icing etc

Body Checking
No bodychecking is allowed

Violating the Rules; Penalties
When a player violates the rules, the game official will stop the game by blowing the whistle and explaining the reason for the stoppage to the player. No penalties are given. A new face-off will take place in the centre of the playing surface. If necessary the game official can remove a player from the game for the remainder of the shift.

If a player continuously violates the rules, the coach from the player’s team may remove him or her for the remainder of the game and substitute a new player in his or her place.

Centre Zone
For maximum ice use and player development, players that are not playing should participate in drills for skating, stick-handling, passing and shooting in the centre zone. This zone should also be used as the player’s bench.
TEACHING TOOLS

Below is a Tool Box, which has a list of the teaching tools that will assist in the operation of a successful Learn to Play Program. As the coach gain experience they are encouraged to add their own teaching tools to the Tool Box to improve the learning environment during practices.

- Child sized goal nets or goal insert
- Junior sized sticks
- Lightweight pucks
- Cross-ice rink boards
- Chairs
- Agility boards
- Soccer ball
- Tennis balls (two colours)
- Pylons (large and small)
- Rope – 5 to 6 meters
- Can of spray paint
- Ball hockey balls
- Skipping ropes
- Extra Sticks
- Tape
- Clipboard
- Whistle
- Rink diagram board and marker
LEARN TO PLAY PROGRAM

Ice Diagram Legend

The following symbols are used in the Learn to Play Program Lesson Manuals.

- chair
- puck
- passing
- pylon
- forward skating
- shooting
- hockey stick
- backward skate
- agility board
- player
- puck carrying
- jump over
- coach
- stop
- step over
- paint dot
- lateral movement
- group of players

Forward skating around the circles.

Players in a line-up.

Stop at pylon and do lateral crossovers along the boards.

Step over the agility boards.

Skate forward with the puck.

Backward skating to pylon and pivot to forward skating.

Stop by the pylon.

Backward skating.