



HOCKEY CANADA

NOVICE PROGRAM

Resource Guide



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Frequently Asked Questions





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are the core requirements of the Novice Half-Ice Game Play Model?

The Novice Half-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 Novice Game-Play Model is a 4 vs. 4 model (plus goaltenders) on half-ice. Learning offside and icing will come in time, but the primary focus on age-appropriate training and programming needs to be on skill development in the areas of skating, puck control, 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 game-play model in the transition to Atom hockey.

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

The recommendation in the Novice Game-Play Model is that all players have an opportunity to play goal. All players should rotate through the goaltender position throughout the season. 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 Novice 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 Novice 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 Novice 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 Novice teams permitted to play full-ice games?

Members are responsible for setting the policy for game play for the entire season with the Novice Game-Play Model. Hockey Canada policy permits the transition to full-ice game play after January 15 for second-year Novice players. Please reference the Novice 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 Novice Half-Ice Game format?

There is no requirement to use smaller nets for Novice games. With goaltenders in full equipment in net, regular nets (4x6) are a suitable option. However, small nets (3x4) are also acceptable.

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

There is no need to draw a crease for the neutral zone net(s). Each net should be placed just inside the centre circle which will provide a small marking to aid the goaltending in positioning themselves in front of the net. If there is no circle, a crease may be drawn on the ice.

10. What are the advantages of practicing in small areas and playing half-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 half-ice hockey game?

The average dimensions of a regular ice surface in Canada is 200 feet by 85 feet. The half-ice playing surface can be a maximum of 100 feet by 85 feet if the dividers are placed at the centre-ice line. In a study conducted by Hockey Alberta, the half-ice playing surface illustrated the same stride distance for a child as relative to the full sheet of ice for an adult.

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 Novice 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 Novice players and/or Novice 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 Novice Game-Play Model is player development. It is important in both station-based practices and in half-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 half-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 Novice 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 Novice Game-Play Model, all officials on the ice need to wear the minimum of an officiating jersey with branch crest, black pants and a black CSA-approved helmet with a CSA-approved half visor.

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?

Officials are encouraged to keep additional pucks in their pocket in the event a puck is shot out of play. The 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 Novice level?

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

The Community Coach Stream 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 – Initiation 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 Novice Skills Manual is a set of ice-session plans that are designed for the age-appropriate and skill-specific needs of young Novice 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 take-down 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