



# MINOR HOCKEY DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

## MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION DEVELOPMENT





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### **Dear Minor Hockey Executive / Coach / Parent**

I hope this information will be of benefit to you in your attempt to focus on the development of hockey players as they begin their journey to enjoying the game of hockey, no matter what level of success they achieve, as a life long sport.

Enclosed you will find information pertaining to all of Hockey Canada's Development programs and how to use them for the purpose of creating a development plan or philosophy for your association.

Hockey Canada believes every player should have the chance to participate in the great game of hockey, to learn the skills of the game, and be given the opportunity to achieve a sense of accomplishment through their participation.

The goal of Hockey Canada is not to put players in the NHL, but rather to ensure a meaningful, enjoyable experience. This is not to say that we don't want boys and girls to achieve the highest levels possible, but rather if we go about it the right way they will have a better chance.

The information contained within this entire presentation is meant to help Minor Hockey Associations determine what their needs are and what programs they have at their disposal for the education and development of the executive members, parents, coaches and players. The following topics and programs are the focus

**MHA Philosophy**

**Initiation Program**

**Coaching Program**

**Hockey Canada Skills Development Program**

**Chevrolet Safe & Fun Hockey**

**Female Hockey**

**Safety / Risk Management**

**Officiating**



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### **Issues to Consider**

There are a number of issues concerning the development philosophy of Minor Hockey Associations today. The issues below have been cited as the five most enduring issues for MHA's to deal with:

**Player evaluation**  
**Coach recruitment / development / retention**  
**Practice versus games**  
**Competition**  
**Pressure from parents**

It is the hope that the information contained within, will help Minor Hockey Associations deal with, and develop a philosophy regarding these issues to help make the game appositive experience for everyone.

### **Player Evaluation**

Player evaluation can be one of the most difficult tasks for a Minor Hockey Association to deal with. It can also be the foundation for which an association is built upon.

In most cases, player evaluation is used to place players onto teams. An important aspect that is missing in many cases is that most Minor Hockey Associations don't use player evaluations as a tool for coaches to develop players based on their individual strengths and weaknesses.

Placing players on teams is one thing, but what you do with those players once the teams are formed is another. Some communities only have enough players for one team in each age category, others have many teams in each age category, thus tiering occurs. Whether you have one team or multiple teams in each category, player evaluation can be used and should be used as a way of developing players.

Having a solid player evaluation process in place can help make the ordeal a lot easier. Not only will it give you a reference point in dealing with parents, it will also give you and your coaches a starting point to determine where your players are at skill wise; thus, beginning the process of utilizing the various Hockey Canada programs to educate parents and coaches on the importance of developing skills.

To look at some sample evaluation plans and processes, please refer to the Player Evaluation section for ideas on how to make your evaluation process smooth, as well educational for all involved.



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## **Coach Recruitment / Development / Retention**

Finding volunteer coaches qualified to meet the needs of your association requires work. Once you've successfully secured a volunteer's support, it's important to ensure that the benefits of volunteering continue to outweigh the costs.

When volunteer initiatives are well managed and individuals are matched to service opportunities that are mutually beneficial to the association and the volunteer, your recruitment job becomes much easier. Satisfied volunteer coaches can be strong advocates for your organization's mission and persuasive partners on your volunteer recruitment team.

There are many ways to foster volunteer coach retention. Just as people are attracted to volunteer at your organization for a multitude of reasons there are many reasons why they continue to serve. Oftentimes, these reasons are different than the ones that persuaded them to give of their time in the first place.

**For example, a 1983 study of volunteer firefighters by Pearce "found that these subjects stated that they joined the organization for predominately service reasons, but friendships and social interaction were more influential in their decision to remain with it" (cited in Brudney 1990, p. 162)**

For more information on coach recruitment, development and retention please refer to the MHA Coach Development or coaching sections.



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### Practice vs Games

One of the biggest issues surrounding the development of hockey players is the number of practices they have compared to the number of games they play. An ideal, realistic ratio is two practices for every one game played for ages 7 – 13.

While some associations have no problem in meeting the recommended ratio, others have great difficulty in finding enough ice time to meet this practice to game ratio.

Are games really necessary, or are they all cracked up to be? Not when you look at the stats below, especially if you are trying to develop skills.

### A Game by the Numbers

- Players will have the puck on their stick for an average of **8 seconds per game**.
- Players will take an average of **1 - 2 shots** per game.
- **99% of the feedback coaches give players is when they have the puck. Ironically, players only have the puck on their stick for 0.2% of the game.**
- **1 efficient practice** will give a player more skill development than **11 games** collectively.

If you look at these stats, how can we expect kids to develop when they are playing more games than practicing? Studies show that the better kids are at something, the more they will enjoy it, and the longer they will play. Many kids quit hockey because they get to the level where they can't compete due to lack of skill – therefore it is no longer fun.

At the ages of 5 – 6 or 5 – 7, the practice to game ratio should be even higher (6:1) and realistically there is no need for formal games.

**"I think 2 to 1 or 3 to 1 practice to games is the way to go. In practice, that's where you become a better hockey player. You get to have the puck on your stick more, and take more shots on net than in any game. Even as a professional you don't have the puck on your stick that much, and at a young age it's crucial to develop your skills, you can't do that in an organized game."**

**-Paul Kariya  
Canadian Men's Olympic Team**

For more information regarding skill development, practice planning or drills, please refer to the Initiation Program, or Hockey Canada Skills Program information.



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## Competition

Competition is a fact of life, and something we face in all aspects of society. Competition is healthy, but there is a time and a place for it. Winning and losing should not be a priority for young players. Players should learn to compete in practice, and want to get better, but it needs to be put in the proper context by MHA's, coaches and parents.

**“When they have too many games when they are young, they are going out trying to fulfill a role and trying to not make mistakes, and as a result they get very little skill improvement.”**

**“There is no use teaching team play, until the kids have reasonable mastery of skating, passing and puck control”**

**- Dr. Murray Smith – Sports Psychologist**

Let the kids play informal games (especially at ages 5 – 6), don't keep stats, wins and losses will become important enough down the road, but when they are just learning the game, let them learn without putting any pressure on them.

For kids aged 5 – 6 or even 7 there is no need to play full ice, formal games. Playing half-ice or cross-ice games will create far more development.

## Rationale

- The rink was created for 10 adult skaters per side; therefore, why should we expect young kids to play on the same size area. To look at it proportionally, adults would be playing on a rink the size of a soccer field.
- During any game, the majority of play happens in one zone, so  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the ice is not being used anyway.
- Kids need to learn to handle the puck in a confined area.
- Half-ice or cross-ice games allow for more kids to participate, rather than sitting on the bench.
- A child's version of a game is much different than that of an adult. Kids would rather be on the ice being active. If you ask them what their favorite part of hockey is they will say handling the puck, shooting, scoring, and skating – How much do they really get to do that in a formal game?





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### **Pressure from Parents**

Pressure from parents is the most taxing thing for MHA's/ coaches to deal with. Most parents want to see more games, and wins and losses are far more important to them than they are the kids. Kids don't abuse officials, or show lack of respect until they see their parents doing it.

The number one thing MHA's/ Coaches can do is to try and educate the parents on why they are doing things the way they are and keep the lines of communication open. The stats used previously can be a great help in getting parents on side with developing skills.

For more information on dealing with and educating parents, please refer to the Chevrolet Safe & Fun Hockey information.

**Thousands of kids play hide and go seek everyday, yet there are not referees, stats, and records of wins and losses.**

**The main thing is not to rush the kids into situations they are not ready for, and keep things in perspective, that the game of hockey is a participation sport for kids, and not meant to be entertainment for parents.**



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### Summary

- 1) Develop a philosophy with the foundation being developing skills and stick to it.
- 2) Communicate and educate your parents and coaches on this philosophy.
- 3) Use player evaluation as a foundation for skill development, and education of coaches, parents, and players.
- 4) Recruit and educate coaches on the basic philosophy and get them to buy in. Give them the resources available to help follow the philosophy.
- 5) Ensure each team has a sufficient practice to game ratio when coordinating ice times. Give the young players good ice times, and share the ice so they get more of it, without more cost.
- 6) Don't focus on the competition aspect, and winning or losing, if you take care of the above items, everything else will fall into place as the players get older.

The goal of every Minor Hockey Association should be to give each player the best possible chance to participate, have fun and succeed. Dealing properly with some of the issues discussed here, will assist MHA's in doing so.

Sincerely,

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**Mgr. Player Development**

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