

Equal Opportunity For Participation

Information taken from Ringette Ontario Team Tryout & Formation Guidelines, published September 2, 2021

Ringette Canada has recently published guidelines around Equal Opportunity for Participation in the sport of ringette. The purpose of these Guidelines is to describe how individuals of all gender identities, and those who do not wish to gender identify or do not gender identify, are able to participate in our sport. Ringette Ontario recognizes that this policy may impact the traditional way Regions and Association/Clubs host tryouts come this fall.

At the time of registration, Clubs/Associations, Regions, and Leagues sanctioned by Ringette Ontario should reasonably strive to offer programming for the following competition categories:

- Girls/Women only ringette
- Boys/Men only ringette
- Mixed ringette (formerly known as Co-Ed)

When it is not logistically possible to offer the above competition categories because registration numbers do not permit appropriate formation of teams, alternative solutions which focus on providing opportunities for meaningful participation and competition in a safe and welcoming environment should be considered. These may include but are not limited to:

- Allowing mixed teams to play in female only ringette leagues within the same age group/division or in a different age group/division based on a comparable competitive level of play of the team.
- Allowing boys/men only teams to play in mixed or girls/women only leagues within the same age group/division or in a different age group/division based on a comparable competitive level of play of the team; or
- Allowing nonbinary and genderfluid athletes to choose the division that they feel fits their identity at the time of registrations.

For the upcoming season we do not anticipate any boys/male only divisions. We recognize that this is a work in progress and will involve marketing the changes and opportunities, as boys move through the competition system. This will especially be focused on entry into our sport in the U10 and under divisions, where we see our largest boys/male numbers.

We do anticipate having boys/males being interested in playing at the A/AA levels but respect that not all female athletes will want to play mixed ringette. If boys are interested in trying out, the Region and Leagues should work with its local clubs to

provide space for mixed teams to participate. In addition, clubs may wish to work together to promote mixed teams and/or opportunities in neighboring clubs.

We understand that these changes may not be welcomed by all, but we are committed to creating a sport, which supports athletes from FUN1 to Active for Life, that is accessible to everyone, and we encourage open conversation on this topic as we move forward with the changes ahead.

Team Formation FAQ

Can males now tryout for A/AA tiers? Yes, males are allowed to try-out for A/AA.

Will Ringette Canada offer Mixed Divisions for U16AA and U19AA at the Canadian Ringette Championships (CRCs)?

If there are two teams within a loop of those teams who make it to CRCs, then yes, Ringette Canada will run a Mixed Division.

Should you run gender specific tryouts for each division? (i.e. mixed, female only) Each tier/division should have an open tryout for any participant who wishes to tryout, as tryouts should be open and team formation takes place afterwards based on assessments and numbers. It is recommended that all players who arrive to attend the tryout, should sign a form indicating whether they would play on a mixed and/or a female only team (or they may choose both!). This form would be considered binding and if a mixed team is formed, and an offer to play on this team is given to the athlete, they cannot be released to play on a female only team.

Can a team be labelled as female only? If yes, when can that be done?

Yes, teams may be labeled as female only, mixed, or male only. However, this should be done after tryouts have been held and a fair and unbiased assessment of the players has occurred, and all offers to play have been accepted.

If there are not enough teams to create two teams in a division loop, how do we support that male player?

Males who try out for A & AA where the formation of mixed team is not possible, may be offered the opportunity to play up in the B category. However, that must be assessed on a case-to-case basis. (e.g.) a U14A Male player may play in the U16B division.

How and when does the gender category of the team get selected? Is it set by the coach or the association? Do they need regional approval?

The gender category of the team should be determined after tryouts have been held and a fair and unbiased assessment of the players has occurred. The gender determination should be done by the Association, not the coach and your Region should be advised so that they can work with the clubs to determine potential competitive loops.

Can a league, declare a division all female while others can be mixed?

Yes, a league can host a gender division if they have at least 2 teams in that division. However, a league cannot declare themselves as female only and must offer a mixed division if there at least 2 teams in that division.

If there is a potential male on a provincial team, do there have to be other teams with males at the same level for them to play, for the male to stay on the team?

As per Ringette Canada guidelines, for a competitive loop to occur, there must be 2 teams in each division for the team to be viable. Regions will work with clubs to determine the number of teams and competitive opportunities for teams in each division. However, an exception may be in cases where a league runs a division with female only teams but where there is agreement of those teams to allow the mixed team to play.

Can a Club/Association Board or Convenor decide to make a team all-female prior to tryouts?

No, a Club/Association Board or Convenor may not declare a team as all-female prior to tryouts. All tryouts must be open to all genders to attend. However, a Club/Association, may collect interest in each gender category to gauge interest.

Can mixed teams in a league play all female teams?

Yes, if all members of the female teams agree that they are comfortable with playing the mixed teams. No team should be forced to play a mixed team if they do not wish to do so. If a team does not agree to play a mixed team in their league, then the league convenor can ensure that those teams are not scheduled to play against each other. For example, Leagues and Regions can attempt to get support from all female teams to compete against mixed teams. Female teams may play in both "mixed" and all female divisions.

At what stage can the Region or Club/Association declare the gender of a team?

After team tryouts have occurred using a fair and unbiased assessment process and all players who have been offered a position have accepted it. Due to the lack of mixed teams, the Region would need to assess reasonable competition expectations.

When a player is made an offer to play, does the offer to play have to indicate the gender category of the team?

When attending tryouts, all players should sign a form attesting to whether they will play on a mixed team and/or female team (or both). When sending out an offer to play, the gender category should be included, with the players' signed form as part of their offer to join the team. This can be done as part of all team offer letters, no matter the final gender category of the team.

Can a player ask to be released to go to another Club/Association if their Club/Association is hosting a mixed team?

If a player signs a form before their tryout indicating that they will play on a mixed team, they should not be released to another association based on the gender category of the team.

Does the position of a player matter when determining the gender category of the team? (e.g.) goalie or skater?

No, a team is considered mixed as soon as there is 1 player of another gender category on the team – it does not matter if they are a goalie or a skater. Transgender and non-binary athletes are referred to the RO Transgender Inclusion Policy for how they wish to be identified.

Can males be two-team players? If yes, can they two team with a female only team for the purpose of tournaments?

Two team player agreements function the same no matter the gender of the player. If a male is a twoteam player, then they can only play on a mixed and/or male only team. If a female is a two-team player, then they can only play on a mixed and/or female only team.

Will tournaments be hosting divisions of all gender types? How will this be communicated by the tournaments?

Ringette Ontario has created a new Event Sanctioning Committee which will be reviewing all event applications for the province. With traditional tournaments not being sanctioned until January 1st, we recognize that our tournament season will be very short (8 weeks) and that we will need to be very strategic in our assessment of divisions offered by tournaments to ensure that there is at least one division for each division/tier and gender category over the period that tournaments will be offered. Sanctioned tournaments, and the divisions being offered, will be posted on the RO website with frequent updates.

Will Mixed teams be allowed to compete at the Ringette Ontario A & AA Championships?

Yes, if there are 2 registered teams in a division, then a division for those teams will be offered at the RO A & AA Championships.

Can a coach release a male player if there is no reasonable likelihood of them making the top 15-17 players on a team?

A male player should be released the exact same way a female player should be released. If a male player does not make the team, then they should be released in the exact same manner and timing as a female player.