

YOUTH PLAYING GUIDELINES

Game Tactics



These playing guidelines and rules serve as recommendations for those administering basketball programs. We understand organizations and facilities may not always be able to accommodate all guidelines. In that case, we suggest modifications where limitations exist (i.e. inability to raise or lower the height of a basket, re-drawing court lines, or not having a shot clock). These guidelines help align [Canada Basketball's Long Term Development Model](#).

Canada Basketball also recommends all ages play small-sided games of 3on3 and 4on4. Especially at [younger ages](#), these games help with higher repetitions and touches to focus on skill development.

GAME TACTICS

Age	Playing Time	Set Defense	Pressing Defense
5-6	Equal playing time	Only player-to-player defense	Pressing is not allowed throughout the game
7-8	Equal playing time	Only player-to-player defense	Pressing is not allowed throughout the game
9-11	Equal playing time in periods 1-3. Coaches discretion in the 4 th quarter and each extra period.	Only player-to-player defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Player-to-player defense may be extended full court in the 4th quarter and extra time.• Leading Team may not extend defense over half court when leading by 25 points or more.
12-14	Coaches discretion throughout the game	All allowed throughout the game	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pressing allowed throughout the competition.• Leading Team may not press when leading by 25 points or more.
15-18	Coaches discretion throughout the game	All allowed throughout the game	Pressing allowed throughout the competition

Age	Double Team/Crowding	Stealing from the Dribbler
5-6	Double team/crowding is not allowed throughout the game	Stealing from a dribbler is not allowed
7-8	Double team/crowding is not allowed throughout the game	Stealing from a dribbler is not allowed
9-11	Double team/crowding is not allowed throughout the game	Coaches discretion throughout the game
12-14	Allowed throughout at the discretion of the coach	Coaches discretion throughout the game
15-18	Allowed throughout at the discretion of the coach	Coaches discretion throughout the game

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Definitions & Rationale

Playing Time: To ensure that all young children participating in the sport have an opportunity to experience the game, equal and fair playing time is recommended for 5-6 and 7-8 year-olds. For 9-11 year-olds, equal playing time is recommended for periods 1-3, while allowing coaches discretion in the 4th and extra periods. Equal and fair playing time is encouraged throughout the game.

Set Defense: The player-to-player requirement for 5-6, 7-8, and 9-11 year-olds encourages physical activity and movement, and promotes the development of individual skill related to guarding a player both on and off the ball.

Pressing Defense: Pressing defense is prohibited for 5-6 and 7-8 year-olds to help children develop principles of movement with and without the ball in a half-court setting. For 9-11 year-olds, permitting player-to-player defense to extend full-court in the 4th and extra periods allows players to become accustomed to full-court defense while not having to understand sophisticated zone presses. It also allows for an introduction to competitive tactics.

Double-Team/Crowding: Crowding the ball with multiple players (referred to as “double-teaming”) is not allowed for 5-6, 7-8, or 9-11 year-olds due to skill and size discrepancies among children at these ages. Crowding is allowed for 12-14 year-olds and older to remain consistent with pressing defense standards.

Stealing from the Dribbler: At ages 5-6 and 7-8, players are not allowed to steal the ball from an active dribbler. This allows ball-handlers to develop dribbling skills and confidence with the basketball.