

# SMGHL U9 2025-2026 GAME STRUCTURE

The rules for half-ice U9 game play have been created to maximize player engagement by increasing opportunities to interact with the puck and other players. A simplified version of the game allows younger players to focus on elements of the game they enjoy most.

## **RINK SETUP**

- One set of barriers or two sets of barriers with a space in between for spare players

## **PLAYING RULES**

- 4 vs. 4 format – plus each team with a goaltender
- Each team is required to have two goaltenders, one for each half of the ice (if teams are playing two simultaneous games)
- 3-minute warm-up
- **Two 21-minute halves**, 1-minute break between periods
- Shift length – **90 seconds** in duration with an automatic buzzer or whistle sounding to indicate players change. All players change on the buzzer
- The clock continues to run throughout the 21-minute half.
- Both games are synchronized, officials work together to keep the games synchronized (if playing two games)
- If there are fewer than four players on the bench, the active player designated to stay out for the following shift must tag up at the bench prior to continuing play.
- There will be two face-offs during the game; The first face-off will start the game; the second face-off will start the second half.

## **SHIFTS**

- Player shifts are recommended to be **90 seconds** in length, a buzzer or whistle will sound to signal line changes.
- On the buzzer/whistle sounds, players must relinquish control of the puck immediately and vacate the ice. The new players enter the ice immediately.
- Failure to immediately relinquish control of the puck or new players entering the ice surface prematurely may result in a penalty (see below) for the offending team.

## **CHANGE OF POSSESSION**

- Goaltender freezes the puck – the official blows the whistle to indicate the attacking team backs off and defending team gets possession.
- Puck shot out of play – the offending team backs off and the official gives the non-offending team a new puck.

## **PENALTIES**

- Minor penalties are noted with the official briefly raising their arm to indicate a penalty will be assessed. At the conclusion of the shift, the official notifies the coach of the infraction and the number of the offending player.
- If the offending team controls the puck after the infraction, the official blows the whistle and calls for a change of possession; the non-offending team is given room to play the puck (three-meter cushion).
- The offending player will sit out the next shift, but the team will play even strength.
- Should an infraction occur, that would normally require a player to be ejected from the game (game misconduct, match penalty or gross misconduct), the player will be removed from the remainder of that game. Even under these circumstances, teams will not play shorthanded, and no game incident report will be required. A major penalty report must be completed and sent to [discipline@owha.on.ca](mailto:discipline@owha.on.ca)