

How to plan a practice!

Ask yourself, then answer these questions: What (who) are you working with and what do you want to work on?

1. Logistics

- a. Time
- b. Duration
- c. Location
- d. Full ice/half ice
 - i. Who are you sharing with? Same division, different.
- e. How many athletes expected
 - i. Assigning them to groups/pinny colours?
- f. How many coaches/junior coaches coming – what are their roles, are they running a station? Do they know what's expected of them?
- g. How many goalies?
- h. Equipment – rings, pylons, pinnies, 1st aid, binder (emergency info) etc.

2. Practice sections:

- a. Introduction: greet athletes, share practice plan, skills planned etc. Can be done pre-practice when athletes arrive or via email ahead of time, or a combination of both.
- b. Warmup: gradually increase intensity of movement. Includes a general warmup and specific warmup (passing, shooting, making saves). Reserve 15-20 minutes for this. There are lots of games that work for warmups.
- c. Main part: this includes everything in the practice that is not warmup or cooldown. All skill development, strategy and tactic work, and conditioning if applicable. Reserve 30-50 minutes for this.
- d. Cool down: gradually decrease the intensity of movement.
- e. Conclusion: reiterate the focus of the practice, remind athletes about what's next (game, practice, tournament, etc.). Can be done on the ice, bench, or dressing room.

3. What to work on? *Always start by thinking about what you want to work on, not just which drills you want to do.*

Try to limit the variety of skills/tactics you work on in a single practice. This varies depending on the level, but working on too many different skills is challenging to athletes and doesn't give them enough time to take it in. There are things it's impossible to separate (checking vs. ring protection) but you can choose which part to emphasize and provide feedback on. Pick one from each category (categories are incomplete – see Athlete Development Matrix).

- a. Skating: forward, backward, crossovers, stops, pivots
- b. Ring skill: passing, receiving, checking, ring protection, shooting
- c. Strategy: breakout, free pass, offensive zone play, defensive triangle, forechecking, special situations.
- d. Goaltending: positioning, ring distribution, crease movement, rebound control, fakes

4. **Selecting drills and progressions.** Starting from the skills/tactics you want to work on, and, catering to the mid-level ability of your team, find or adapt a drill to practice that skill/tactic. Make sure the drill has progressions so it will grow with athletes.
 - a. If applicable, allow athletes an opportunity to practice just the skill/tactic without outside pressure/opponents. This doesn't need to be game-like and athletes should be given the chance to do multiple reps in a short period of time. Examples:
 - i. If your skill is a 2-foot stop, don't have them practice by skating all the way to the other end of the ice and stop once. Have them set on a zigzag pattern and stopping every line, or use pylons.
 - ii. When learning to pass, have athletes pass to themselves against the boards. They still learn about proper technique and aim (the ring should come back to them) but without waiting for a partner to catch a pass and return it. Athletes may get 3-4 times more passes done than in pairs.
 - b. Find or adapt more than one drill that allows athletes to practice the same skill/tactic in a way that mimics how the skill/tactic is used in a game. Some skills/tactics lend themselves better to this than others, but it's imperative to make sure that you avoid drill setups that go against ringette tactics/strategies. If you're not sure what that might look like, ask Ringette Alberta!
 - c. Make the skill/tactic fun by playing a game that incorporates the skill. Many forms of tag or relay races can use basic ringette skills.

General Considerations

1. Safety has to be the first consideration always. Make sure any races don't end too close to the boards, keep athletes in lanes that avoid collisions, have lines start in safe spaces.
2. **Don't forget about your goalies!** Make sure they are included in team huddles, have a coach assigned to them, and know what's expected during each segment of practice. If you're not sure how to approach goalie coaching, contact your association coaching director or Ringette Alberta.
3. Athletes often compare themselves to teammates. Who's the fastest? Who's the strongest? Try to create drills/progressions/games that offer athletes a chance to compete against themselves, or that require teamwork.
 - a. How far did they glide this time? Make a mark on the ice/leave a ring there. See if they can go that far or further the next repetition!
4. Plenty of relay races, ring races, variations of tag, and other activities can be modified to practice certain skills.
5. Use stations! This allows athletes to practice skills in smaller groups where they may feel less pressure to do well quickly, therefore taking their time to actually learn a skill. Athletes can also be separated into similar small groupings where they are closer in ability. Make sure there are enough coaches to run each station and that they are prepared.