



U7 FAQs



The U7 program gives young players the best on-ice experience, which leads to more skills, more ice time and more fun! It is clear that cross-ice hockey for five- and six-year-old players helps develop the finer points of hockey and will benefit them in the long term.

We've never focused on half-ice/cross-ice hockey, and the kids are learning and having fun; why should we change?

A. Rationale –

- Half-ice/cross-ice hockey has always been part of the U7 Program, but has not been implemented in the same way in every community – beginning this fall (2017-18 season), cross-ice/half-ice is mandatory at the U7 level because we want to make sure all kids are learning the basic skills in an age-appropriate manner, and following the same steps based on our long-term player development model.
- Half-ice/cross-ice hockey at the U7 age effectively right-sizes the playing surface for young players:
 - You don't put five- and six-year-olds on a full-size soccer pitch, or expect them to play basketball on a full-sized court with no height adjustments – hockey is no different.
 - Half-ice/cross-ice hockey allows young players the opportunity for more puck-touches, which promotes greater opportunity for skill development (puck-handling, shooting, skating, coordination) and decision-making.
 - Players on half-ice/cross-ice have been shown to receive five times more passes and take six times more shots than when they are on a full-sized rink.
 - Small-area games are used at all levels of the game – including senior national teams and the NHL.
- The benefits of half-ice/cross-ice hockey go beyond player development; the special boards and bumpers allow minor hockey associations to alleviate pressure around scheduling and ice-time availability by safely allowing multiple practices and games to take place on one rink at the same time.

Q. What changes does this mean for coaching and the logistics of running the U7 Program in our community?

A. Changes you can expect –

- Special bumpers and boards have been developed to reconfigure rinks to half-ice, cross-ice or small areas.
- The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) Coach 1 – Intro Coach program has been updated to deliver instruction on age-appropriate programming.

- Resources such as the Hockey Canada Network – a best-in-class skill-development resource geared to coaches – features information on the purpose of cross-ice hockey and how to run effective on-ice sessions for the five- and six-year-old U7 age group.
- The special boards and bumpers allow hockey associations to safely put multiple practices and games on one rink at the same time, allowing associations to alleviate pressure around scheduling and ice-time availability.

Q. Does half-ice/cross-ice really make a big difference?

A. Absolutely –

- Players on half-ice/cross-ice have been shown to receive five times more passes and take six times more shots than when they are on a full-sized rink.
- Small-area games are used at all levels of the game – including senior national teams and the NHL.
- You don't put five- and six-year-olds on a full-sized soccer pitch, or have them play basketball on a full-sized court with no adjustments made for the net height – hockey is no different.

Q. Is this just a money-grab that allows associations to put more kids on the ice at the same time? Will U7 registration costs be lowered now that more teams can be on the ice at the same time, reducing ice time costs?

A. No –

- Half-ice/cross-ice hockey at the U7 age is not new – it has always been part of the program, which was built more than 35 years ago.
- This isn't about revenue – it's about delivering age-appropriate programming and skill development.
- One of the benefits of half-ice/cross-ice hockey is that it will allow associations who have not been delivering half-ice/cross-ice hockey at the U7 level to make more effective use of their ice time and availability in a safe manner.