



SEASONAL STRUCTURE



The U9 Seasonal Structure can take on many forms. This section identifies a set of minimum standards that Hockey Canada membership must adhere to. Keep in mind, there is some flexibility because the framework (see attached images) provide a set of recommended timeframes when hockey associations build their seasonal plan. If the season starts in October or even as late as November, the hockey association should still follow the guidelines of a balanced season approach. Some of the dates and timeframes are guidelines while others are fixed. The number of games and practices are also recommendations based on what Hockey Canada has set out in the Long-Term Player Development Model and U9 Player Pathway documents.

1. Development Phase

During the development phase, coaches should be focused on skill development. The ideal practice to game ration has been identified as 3:1, or three practice sessions to one game played. The start of the season for U9 players is not a fixed time. Therefore, the guidelines outlined in the U9 Seasonal Structure are just that – guidelines.

The goal for every hockey association should be to set aside a window of time where young players have more practices than games. The Hockey Canada U9 Skills Manual provides coaches with a series of well-crafted practice plans (ice sessions) that focus on developing fundamental movement skills like striding, turning and stopping, manipulation skills like shooting, passing, puck control and the very important motor skills of agility, balance, coordination. All of these components should be a part of player-centered skill development in a fun and safe environment that promotes self-confidence.

2. Regular Season Phase

The regular season phase represents the bulk of the season in the U9 Seasonal Structure. The practice to game ratio shifts to 2:1 or two practices for every game played.

It is important that coaches continue to focus on skill development during practice sessions. Once again, the Hockey Canada U9 Skills Manual provides a wide variety of resources in the form of practice sessions as well as drills that will assist in the delivery of practices that will meet the skills development needs of young players. Hockey Canada has developed additional resources to support coaches in their efforts to deliver practice plans. The Hockey Canada Network, Drill Hub and the U7 Program all contain age-appropriate and skill-specific resources to meet the needs of young U9 hockey players.

Even though the regular season phase has a lower practice to game ratio (2:1) through the months of November, December and January, there are still up to 24 possible practice sessions to support and encourage young players through this skill acquisition phase of the season.

3. Game Play Phase or Transition Phase

The approved Hockey Canada policy for U9 hockey permits the introduction of full-ice game play in the later part of the season for second year U9 players. In the event there is a desire to introduce second-year U9 players to the full-ice game model, membership is required to wait until after January 15 to allow U9 teams to participate in full-ice games.

The transition phase has a practice to game ratio of 1:1, or one practice to one game played. It is important to ensure practice sessions continue through the Transition Phase. This will provide coaches with the opportunity to continue to reinforce individual skill development elements in practices in addition to introducing players to concepts attached to the full-ice game.

[OWHA SEASONAL STRUCTURE FOR U9: AGE 7](#)

[OWHA SEASONAL STRUCTURE FOR U9: AGE 8](#)

[OWHA SEASONAL STRUCTURE FOR U9: AGE 7-8 \(Mixed Programming\)](#)