**U18 Coaches Handbook**





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## **Introduction**

### Purpose of the Booklet:

The purpose of this booklet is to provide hockey coaches with a valuable resource for effectively training and developing young players under the age of 9. Through age-appropriate training and skill development, this booklet aims to support coaches in nurturing the next generation of hockey stars while ensuring their physical and emotional well-being.

Certainly! Here's a description of the role of a hockey coach for young players under 9 years old:

### The Role of a Hockey Coach:

As a coach for young hockey players under the age of 9, your role is both significant and rewarding. You play a vital part in shaping these budding athletes not just as players but as individuals. Your responsibilities encompass various aspects, and here's what you can expect:

- Teaching Fundamental Skills: Your primary role is to introduce and teach the fundamental skills of hockey, including skating, passing, shooting, and basic game rules. Focus on building a strong foundation, as these skills will serve as the cornerstone of their hockey journey.

- Creating a Safe and Inclusive Environment: Ensure that your coaching environment is safe, inclusive, and free from any form of discrimination. Encourage fair play, sportsmanship, and teamwork to help young players develop not just as athletes but as responsible and respectful individuals.

- Fostering a Love for the Game: Instill a love for hockey in your young players. Make the experience enjoyable and engaging, emphasizing the fun and excitement of the sport. Positive experiences at this age can spark a lifelong passion for hockey.

- Age-Appropriate Training: Recognize the unique developmental needs and attention spans of kids under 9. Design practices and training activities that are age-appropriate and tailored to their physical and cognitive abilities.

- Supporting Individual Growth: Every child is different. Recognize and support the individual strengths and weaknesses of each player. Encourage their growth at their own pace and avoid undue pressure.

- Building Confidence: Boosting players' confidence is crucial. Celebrate their successes, no matter how small, and provide constructive feedback to help them improve. A confident player is more likely to enjoy the game and perform better.

- Communication: Effective communication is key. Interact with players, parents, and guardians in a clear and respectful manner. Keep them informed about schedules, expectations, and the progress of the team.

- Safety and Well-Being: Prioritize the safety and well-being of your players. Ensure they are properly equipped, and educate them about injury prevention and sportsmanship. Know basic first aid, and be prepared to respond to injuries.

- Team Building: Foster a sense of camaraderie among your players. Team-building activities and lessons in cooperation are important at this stage, as they lay the foundation for effective teamwork in the future.

- Lifelong Skills: Remember that the lessons learned through hockey extend beyond the rink. Teach life skills such as discipline, time management, and perseverance, which will benefit your young players in their personal and academic lives.

### Coaching Female Hockey Players

While male and female athletes do differ in some important ways, coaches should also understand that in general, males and females are much more alike than different. In fact, most of the research on this topic shows that the few gender differences that do exist often can be explained more by environmental or cultural influences than genetics. In the end, coaches should hold the same high standards for their athletes, whether coaching males or females. All athletes, regardless of gender, respond best when coaches set challenging, yet realistic, training and performance goals and emphasize skill development and improvement. Avoid the myths, and the pitfalls that come with them, of assuming you will always need to tailor your coaching approach to the gender of your athletes.

Any coaching strategy may work just as well for either female or male athletes. The best approach is to familiarize yourself with what is known about some of the potential differences between male and female athletes and then get to know each of your athletes on an individual basis. Showing your athletes that you are genuinely interested in their unique needs, motivations, and learning styles, while being sensitive to potential gender differences, is the surest way to find the best coaching approach for helping your athletes reach their goals. Of the potential differences that do exist, many believe they are less noticeable, or even imperceptible, at young ages.

Some of the potential differences in coaching the different sexes have thought to include:

1. **Confidence.** You may find that your female athlete lacks the same confidence of her male counterpart. Oftentimes this comes from a difference in motor competencies and physical literacy. Research has shown (Jefferies etal., 2019; Kriellaars et al., 2019) in prepubescent children that girls display lower levels of motor competencies than males of the same age. Before kids hit puberty, their bodies are physiologically very similar. Therefore, the differences in physical competencies and their resulting impact on a child’s confidence is purely due to cultural and societal gender biases in the way we treat and train young girls. The Physical Literacy diagram demonstrates the association between competence, confidence, motivation and participation.
2. **Coachability.** In part, due to a level of overconfidence, many males may not take instruction as well from coaches as females. Females tend to respect their coaches and implement instruction quicker than males. Females also tend to be more appreciative of good coaching and more willing to express their gratitude. They tend to want to please the coaching staff.
3. **Cohesion (Team Chemistry)**. Social cohesion, how well teammates get along, tends to be more important to females. Task cohesion, focused on same common goal, is important to both males and females but some feel that the social aspects of the team (how well people are getting along) are more important than reaching a specific goal (winning) when judging their experience. Females tend to look for ways to improve team bonding and build cohesion, but if there is an issue, it can cause more problems.
4. **Goal vs Task Oriented.** It is believed that females tend to be more goal-oriented while males are more task-oriented. When explaining a drill, a female will tend to want to know how the drill fits into the big picture, its overall purpose, while a male player will tend to focus on the task (or drill) at hand.
5. **Achievement vs Avoiding Failure.** Males tend to try to attain high levels of achievement while many females try to avoid failure. This may play out in situations where boys are comfortable with failing initially so that they can master a skill whereas a girl may avoid the drill (especially in public) so as not to publicly fail. Girls may practice in private until they master the skill and then be more willing to demonstrate it publicly.
6. **Perfectionist vs. Lots of Things Really Well.** Linked to a fear of failure, this type of athlete will tend to be a perfectionist. While they may avoid doing something in public for fear of failure, they will tend to practice the skill repetitively in private until they have perfected it. Those focused on achievement may be more willing to practice a variety of skills to excel at a lot of things.
7. **Sensitivity.** Female athletes may be more sensitive than their male counterparts. This might lead to the possibility of more tears in the women’s locker room than the men’s.



In reality, every athlete, male and female, exists on a spectrum of personality characteristics. It is important to get to know each person as an individual and tailor your approach to the individual, much like raising children. Each person is unique in their own right and will motivate themselves and will learn in their own individual way.

[Coaching Education Program - Coaching Female Hockey Players - USA Hockey](https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/5cef-2149201/The_Coaching_Female_Hockey_Players_2020_FINALs.pdf)

## **Conditioning Tips**

### Physical Conditioning:

Physical conditioning for young hockey players under the age of 9 should focus on building a solid foundation of athleticism, mobility, and basic fitness. The emphasis at this stage is not on intense workouts but on developing physical literacy and a love for physical activity.

**General Principles of Conditioning**

It is a well-known fact that athletes are less likely to be injured when they are physically fit. In addition, well-conditioned athletes can perform at a higher level of intensity for longer periods of time without becoming fatigued. This resistance to fatigue allows fit athletes to be both physically and mentally in control of themselves from the drop of the puck until the final buzzer.

The basic components of fitness are:

* + - Aerobic and Anaerobic Conditioning
    - Muscular Endurance, Strength and Power
    - Motor Coordination and Skill
    - Joint Flexibility
    - Speed, Agility and Quickness Characteristics

This section will briefly describe these components of fitness. To learn more about the systems specific to your team, please consult a professional in this field.

**Aerobic Conditioning**

This is the training of the athlete to utilize oxygen as an energy source at different workloads. The athlete is generally training for a longer period of time at an intensity of anywhere from 50-85% of maximum exertion. The proper work to rest ratio involves exercising for longer than 120 seconds then resting for an equal amount of time. The development of this energy system is critical in the game of hockey. A large degree of Aerobic Conditioning allows the player to recover better enabling them to perform for an entire game at maximum intensity. The development of Aerobic Conditioning is essential in the development of Anaerobic Conditioning for hockey.

**Anaerobic Conditioning**

This is the training of the athlete to work at a high intensity (greater than 85% of maximum exertion) for a short period of time. Generally, an athlete will work from 0 to 120 seconds with 5 to 6 times as much rest allowed between work intervals. During this type of activity the muscles do not require oxygen to work, however, lactic acid is produced as a by-product that accumulates in the muscle. The key to its success is following the proper work to rest ratios when training. It is through this type of conditioning that players will develop improved speed.

**Muscular Endurance/Strength/Power**

*Muscular endurance* is the ability of a muscle or group of muscles to work for an extended period of time. *Muscular strength* is the ability of a muscle or group of muscles to produce a large amount of force a few times. *Muscular power* is the ability of a muscle or group of muscles to produce force in a short period of time.

**Motor Coordination and Skill**

This is the training of the athlete to perform new skills, agility and quickness. It is important that the development of new skills follow an acceptable sequence, allowing the athlete enough time to practice these skills in a controlled situation prior to executing them in a game situation. When teaching new skills, it is important to first teach these skills when the athlete is well rested and not fatigued. As the new skill is mastered, it is important to allow the athlete to practice the skill under different levels of fatigue and stress.

During the growing years, motor coordination is influenced by periods of rapid growth causing the athlete to lose certain aspects of his/her motor coordination and skill. During these periods, it is important that time is allowed for the athletes’ motor coordination and skill to catch up with their growth.

**Joint Flexibility**

Flexibility is defined as the range of motion (ROM) available at a joint or series of joints.

The development of joint flexibility allows the body to move more freely with less energy costs; indicating that the joint has better movement efficiency. Another way to look at this movement efficiency is in terms of movement stiffness. The goal of flexibility training is to increase the range of motion and decrease the movement stiffness or resistance to movement. A joint’s range of motion is improved through stretching while the movement stiffness is improved through warm-up activities.

Stretching improves a player’s flexibility. Therefore, stretching is a fundamental component of any risk management and safety program. An appropriate stretching program can provide the following benefits:

* + - Increased Range of Motion
    - Increased Strength
    - Increased Movement Efficiency
    - Increased Muscular Relaxation
    - Improved Posture and Symmetry
    - Improved Body Awareness
    - Decreased Muscle Soreness



There are generally two types of stretches or flexibility:

* + - 1. **Dynamic**: Dynamic stretching consists of controlled movement that takes you gently to the limits of your range of motion. It involves the ability to use your own muscular strength to move under control through the entire range of motion of a joint. As hockey requires dynamic movements, it is necessary to conduct dynamic stretching exercises. Start off with the movement at half speed for a couple of repetitions and then gradually work up to full speed movement under control through-out the entire range of motion of the joint.

**Examples** of Dynamic stretching are found in the Dynamic Warm-up section of this module.

* + - 1. **Static/Active**: Static/Active stretching involves gradually assuming a position and then holding it there on your own with no assistance other than using the strength of your own muscles. The position should be held statically, and you can often move further into the stretch position as the stretch sensation subsides.

**Static/Passive:** Static/Passive involves gradually moving into the stretch position and holding that position within the joint’s range of motion using your own body weight, the support of another limb or the support of an external object. Often in static stretching you are advised to move further into the stretch position as the stretch sensation subsides.

It is generally accepted that to improve static flexibility an athlete must stretch regularly holding each stretch for 15-30 seconds and repeating 2-4 times for each side. It has also been shown that the total time spent stretching is important in the amount of range of motion gained.

**Examples** of Static active/Passive stretching are found in the Cool-down section of this module.

**Speed, Agility and Quickness Characteristics**

The secondary fitness characteristics of Speed, Agility and Quickness are cornerstones in hockey. Today’s hockey player must work to develop top speed, defining agility and lightning quickness to adapt to the multi-directional demands of hockey. These fitness parameters are developed through-out the athlete’s career.

The foundation of all of these skills is first the ability of the athlete to stop under control with balance on a single foot regardless of the direction of movement. So it is important to teach the athlete to stop first and move second!

All of these skills are generally anaerobic in nature and must follow the training guidelines as outlined in anaerobic conditioning. As there is also a high skill and motor control component to these skills, the coach must first teach the skills of these drills prior to the training of speed, agility and quickness.

The development of these basic components of fitness is the goal of every coach. Their development should be aimed not only at improving the athletes’ performance, but also for injury prevention. Through proper conditioning a player will be able to better handle the stresses of the game, putting them at a lower risk for injury.

### Off-ice Conditioning: Considerations and Guidelines

* The development of an appropriate off-ice training program should incorporate all the major components of fitness. It is necessary to consult with an appropriate fitness professional when starting an off-ice training program.
* All activities must be appropriate for the age and ability of the player:



* All players must warm-up before and cool-down after all training sessions, and players must drink sufficient amounts of cold water before, during and after sessions.
* It is important that all players are properly supervised during off-ice conditioning and players should never participate in any form of conditioning that aggravates an injury.
* Training and exercise must not be used as a form of punishment.
* The player should be able to stop participating in any exercise if he/she chooses to do so.
* The exercises should be discussed with the player so he/she understands both the purpose of the exercise and the expected stress and fatigue of the exercise.

### Injury Prevention:

1. Warm-Up

A proper warm-up provides a number of benefits to the body:

* Increased general body and tissue temperature
* Increased blood flow throughout the cardio-respiratory system and ultimately to the working muscles.
* Increase in the body’s metabolic processes.
* Decreased resistance of connective tissue thus allowing for greater movement in muscle and associated joint structures.
* Enhanced psychological preparedness of the athlete
* Reduced risk of muscle/tendon pulls.

While the above is not an exhaustive list, the benefits are readily seen.To be effective, a good warm-up should focus on the following:

1. To raise body temperature resulting in an increase in respiratory and heart rate.
2. It should affect as many of the large muscle groups as possible to effectively make tissues less stiff and flexible.
3. It should be made up of general body activities and some sport-related ones.
4. To reduce muscle stiffness, as muscle injury is thought to be related to muscle stiffness.

#### On-Ice Warm-up

Once players are on the ice, the warm-up should follow the same 3 basic phases:

1. General Total Body Warm-up
2. Dynamic Warm-up
3. Speed, Agility and Quickness Warm-up
4. **General Total Body Warm-up** will consist of basic skating drills aimed at gradually increasing the athlete’s heart rate and respiratory rate. The player should get a feel for the ice by doing some basic skating skills:
   * Forward/backward skating in a straight line as well as turning corners to the right and left.
   * Skating in circles to the right and left.
   * Cross-overs to the right and left.
   * Slow stops and starts to the right and left.
5. **Dynamic on-ice Warm-up** will consist of some basic movement exercises such as: Shoulder Flexion
   * Holding the stick with both hands in front of their body, the player lifts their arms over their head as far as possible without arching their back.

Shoulder Extension

* + Holding the stick with both hands behind their back, the player lifts their arms behind their back as high as possible without arching their back.

Trunk Rotation

* + Holding the stick at shoulder height with both hands, the player rotates their trunk to one side, returns to the middle and stops, and then rotates to the opposite side. DO NOT rotate from side to side without stopping in the middle.

***Note: During these exercises the athlete should control the swing. There should be little momentum and no bounce.***

Groin/Thigh

* + While gliding, as in illustration, the left leg is forward with knee bent over the skate.
  + Keep back straight with hips and shoulders square.
  + Keep the right leg straight with inside of skate gliding on the ice.
  + Press forward and down, bending the left knee, stretching the right groin and thigh.
  + Slowly move in and out of stretch.
  + Repeat stretch for opposite leg.

1. **Speed, Agility and Quickness Warm-ups** are done doing

technical skills specific to hockey. The players should ensure that they are moving at top speed prior to the opening face-off.

#### Cool-down

The cool-down is the opposite of the warm-up. If the warm-up prepares the body for exercise, then the cool-down recovers the body following exercise. The cool-down is one of the most important features of the recovery process following exercise.

An appropriate cool-down will:

* + - Aid in the dissipation of waste products
    - Reduce the potential for muscle soreness following exercise
    - Reduce the chances of dizziness or fainting caused by the pooling of venous blood in the extremities
    - Reduce the level of adrenaline in the blood

The cool-down should consist of a period of 5 – 10 minutes of light aerobic activity to keep the muscles working to aid in the dissipation of waste product and keep the blood from pooling in the extremities. It is generally agreed that static stretching during the cool-down is beneficial.

**STRETCHING**

Stretching should be completed after every game, practice and off-ice training activity. General Static Stretching Instructions:

1. Players should be warm prior to stretching.
2. Players should maintain the proper body position and alignment during each stretch.
3. Players should be alert to the feel of the stretch: the feeling should be one of gentle stretch not pain. DO NOT OVER STRETCH.
4. The stretch should be static and not bouncy.
5. Stretches should be held for 15-30 seconds and repeated 2-4 times each.

**Things to Remember**

* + - These stretches should be considered the minimum requirements.
    - For more stretches, consult an appropriate professional in your community.
    - If a player complains of pain during any of the dynamic or static stretching exercises, the player should stop the exercises and seek medical advice.
    - A player’s flexibility will decrease during their growth spurt.This occurs at approximately age 12 for girls and age 14 for boys. More frequent stretching may decrease these effects

Players should perform the following seven (7) stretches to complete the cool-down.

**Cool-down Stretches**

**1. Trunk/Shoulder**A person in a hockey uniform

Description automatically generated

* + Stand with feet shoulder width apart -bring left arm overhead reaching hand down spine
  + Hold the left elbow behind the head with the right hand
  + Bend the trunk straight sideways to the right
  + Do not rotate the trunk

**2. Thigh/Quadriceps**

* + Stand on your left foot holding wall with left hand for support
  + Reach behind with the right hand holding the right foot
  + Keep back straight and hips and shoulders square
  + Lift the right foot and ankle towards the right buttocks
  + Keep the right leg in good alignment: the right shoulder, hip, knee and ankle should be aligned

**3. Thigh/Hip Flexor**

* + Kneel on the right kneeA black and white drawing of a hockey player

    Description automatically generated
  + The left leg is forward with the knee bent
  + Place hands on the floor at each side of the left foot
  + Keep your back straight and hips and shoulders square
  + Stretch forward feeling the stretch in the right thigh and hip flexor

**4. Groin**

* + Sit on the floor with your feet together as in the pictureA person sitting on the floor

    Description automatically generated
  + Keep your back straight
  + Pull your feet in towards your groin until you cannot keep your back straight or keep your feet together
  + Put your elbows on your knees and your hands on your ankles
  + Press your knees towards the floor, to increase the stretch rotate forward at the hips while keeping your back straight

**5. Hamstring/Lower Back**

* + Sit on the floor with the left leg extended and the right leg bent inward as in the pictureA cartoon of a person

    Description automatically generated
  + Keep the back straight and hips and shoulders square
  + Keep the left leg in neutral rotation and aligned with the left shoulder. Reach forward with your hands keeping the back straight (Think of bringing your chest towards the thigh, not the head to the knee)

**6. Low Back/Hip Extensor**

* + Lie on your back with the right knee bent up towards the chest as in the pictureA cartoon of a person lying on the ground

    Description automatically generated
  + Hold the right knee with both hands (If a player complains of pain holding the knee as illustrated; instruct them to hold the leg/thigh under the knee)
  + Keep the right knee in alignment with the right shoulder
  + Pull the right knee towards the chest

**7. Gluteal/Hip/Low Back**

* + Lie on your back with the right hip and knee bent and the foot over the left leg as in the pictureA cartoon of a person falling

    Description automatically generated
  + Place the right hand flat on the floor with the shoulder at 90 degrees as in the picture
  + Turn the head to the left
  + Hold onto the right knee with the left hand and pull the knee towards the floor
  + Allow the body to rotate until the shoulder is about to lift off the ground
  + Keep the shoulders and right hand in contact with the ground.



<https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Safety/Safety-Program/Downloads/stretching_e.pdf>

## **Nutritional Facts**

### Importance of Nutrition:

Coaches play many key roles in the success, enjoyment, mental and emotional growth of athletes throughout their hockey careers. When it comes to nutrition, coaches can be a positive support system by being on the lookout for any red flags, knowing when to refer to a professional, and providing a positive and inclusionary nutritional environment. Below are examples for how to put this into practice:

* Encourage players and parents to bring snacks for before and after practice like fresh fruit, Gatorade, and chocolate milk.
* Pick restaurants for team meals that provide nutrient-dense options.
* Allow time for fluid intake on the ice.
* Give positive reinforcement when you see athletes practice good fueling behaviors.
* Model good nutrition behaviors of your own!

Proper Hydration – Players should learn the importance of proper hydration before, during, and after all games and practices.

[Hockey Nutrition for Champions Profile on Hayley Wickenheiser](https://bgha.ca/Public/Documents/Nutrition/Hockey_Nutrition_w_Hayley_Final_EN.pdf)

## **Player Development**

Before we begin, a reminder for coaches and parents that every player develops at their own pace, so be patient and supportive throughout the process. Celebrate individual and team achievements to keep morale high. With a well-designed player development plan and consistent implementation, you'll have a strong foundation for success and foster skill growth within the player and team.

### Assess Current Skill Levels:

* Conduct individual skill assessments for each player to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. [Use the National Skills Standards and testing program handbook](https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/hockey-programs/players/skills-testing/test-info)
* Observe team dynamics and identify any common weaknesses or areas where the team can improve collectively.

*Hockey Canada Resources for U18:*

* [*Player Skills Evaluation*](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Players/Downloads/2020/u18-skills-evaluation-e.xls)*:*
* [*Player Pathways*](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Coaching/u15-program/downloads/2023/u15-player-pathway-e.pdf)

### Define Skill Development Goals:

* Establish clear, measurable goals for individual players and the team as a whole.
* Goals should be specific, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART goals). For example, improving skating speed by 10% over the next three months.

*Hockey Canada Resources for U18:*

* [*Core Skills*](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Players/Downloads/2020/u15-u18-core-skills-e.pdf)

## **Practice Planning**

### Design a Skill Development Strategy:

* Break down the essential skills required (skating, shooting, passing, stickhandling, positioning, etc.) and prioritize them based on the team's needs.
* Develop a comprehensive training plan that includes both on-ice and off-ice activities.
* Allocate specific practice time for each skill and ensure a balanced approach to cover all aspects of the game.

**Skating**

Skating isn't just the foundation; it's the bedrock of hockey. Start here. Focus on proper stance, balance, and stride. Games like freeze tag or obstacle courses on the ice can make skating drills exciting. Don't forget to celebrate their successes—every stride counts.

[Hockey Canada - Skating Overview](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Players/Downloads/2020/skating-overview-e.pdf)

Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BMd4e2fXDY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wh2jc6QzVn8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMDQPXePY7I>

**Stick Handling**

Teaching stick handling to young ones is like teaching them to dance. Emphasize basic puck control techniques: maneuvering around obstacles and simple dekes. Encourage creativity—let them experiment. Games with stick-handling tasks keep things engaging while honing skills.

[Hockey Canada Stick Handling](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Players/Downloads/2020/puck-control-overview-e.pdf)

Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NBXx8Am5js>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LYvRovOEXM&t=16s>

**Shooting and Scoring**

Shooting isn't just about scoring goals; it's about confidence and technique. Begin with wrist shots—teach them to load the stick, aim, and follow through. Foster a safe space for trial and error. Mini-games make shooting drills thrilling.

[Hockey Canada Shooting and Scoring](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Players/Downloads/2020/shooting-and-scoring-overview-e.pdf)

Skating Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntdPFTKDRt8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcoTPviCGOA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Y43ukgnScI>

**Passing**

Hockey is a team sport, and passing is its lifeblood. Start with simple passes—forehand, backhand, saucer passes. Encourage communication and spatial awareness. Games like 'Keep Away' or 'Hot Potato Passing' enhance passing skills while fostering teamwork.

[Hockey Canada Puck control](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Players/Downloads/2020/puck-control-overview-e.pdf)

Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTQY1UnDDAE&t=7s>

### Game Sense: Bridging Skills and Strategy

Connect the dots—combine individual skills into gameplay scenarios. Mini-games or modified scrimmages provide opportunities to apply learned skills in a game-like setting. Encourage decision-making, positioning, and teamwork.

Off Ice Workouts

The significance of workout routines for children under 9 years old is foundational. It's not about sculpting muscles but rather establishing healthy habits and physical literacy crucial for their development.

At this stage, structured workout routines should integrate a variety of activities aimed at enhancing fundamental movement skills. Balancing between structured exercises and unstructured play is vital to fostering agility, coordination, and motor skills.

Consistency in these routines is key. Regular physical activity, presented in an engaging and enjoyable manner, helps establish habits that may last a lifetime. However, safety remains paramount. Prioritizing supervision, appropriate equipment, and warm-up exercises is crucial to prevent injuries.

Encouraging exploration and resilience is pivotal. Children need space to try, fail, and retry. These routines serve not only to promote physical fitness but also to build confidence and perseverance.

The role of mentors and coaches is pivotal in shaping a positive attitude towards exercise. Being supportive, encouraging, and setting a good example fosters a positive association between children and physical activity, setting the stage for a lifelong commitment to health and fitness.

In essence, the goal of workout routines for children under 9 is not just physical development but also laying the groundwork for a lasting relationship with exercise, promoting overall well-being, and setting the stage for a healthy lifestyle.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_IM_vop-30I>

### Implement Skill Development Activities:

* Organize regular practices that focus on skill development drills and game-like scenarios.
* Utilize a variety of training methods, such as drills, small-area games, scrimmage sessions, and off-ice workouts.
* Incorporate individual and team challenges to keep players motivated and engaged.

*Hockey Canada Resources:*

* [*Small Area Games/Skill Stations*](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Players/Downloads/2018/2018-19-small-area-hockey-game-stations-e.pdf)
* [*Developing Skilled Defencemen*](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Players/Downloads/2020/developing-defencemen-overview-e.pdf)

### Utilize Qualified Coach Resources:

* Ensure that the coaching staff has the necessary qualifications and expertise in hockey development.
* Encourage coaches to attend training workshops, seminars, and conferences to stay updated on the latest coaching methodologies and techniques.
* Leverage available resources like instructional videos, coaching manuals, and online platforms to supplement training.

*Resources:* [*Hockey Canada Drill Hub*](https://hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/hockey-programs/drill-hub)*(Free access to Hockey Canada’s library of drills)*

### Monitor Progress and Measure Success:

* Regularly assess players' progress through ongoing evaluations, both subjective (coach's observations) and objective (data-driven assessments).
* Track individual and team performance metrics, such as goals scored, assists, shooting percentage, and defensive statistics.
* Conduct periodic player feedback sessions to identify areas where individuals feel they have improved or need additional support.

### Adapt and Adjust:

* Continuously review the effectiveness of the training program and make adjustments as needed.
* Seek feedback from coaches, players, and parents to identify areas of improvement or new challenges that arise.
* Stay up to date with the latest developments to ensure the program remains relevant and effective.

## **Game Strategy**

Click on the title (links) below to access content:

### [Basic Concepts of Play](https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0138/6338/CEP_Tactical_Basic_Concepts_of_Play.pdf)

We often talk about practice and the game in terms of offense and defense, as though they are independent parts of the game. We need, instead, to think of offense and defense as a whole or as being the same. We need to teach beginning players that offense works like defense and vice versa.

### [Defensive Faceoffs](https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0138/6339/CEP_Tactical_Defensive_Faceoffs.pdf)

Faceoffs involve gaining possession of the puck in order to create scoring chances or eliminate a scoring chance from your opponent. There are many ways to accomplish these goals by your center winning the faceoff and by having your wings and defensemen move in to gain possession during a faceoff. Conversely, all of the players reacting positively after losing a faceoff will allow them to have the opportunity to quickly regain possession of the puck.

### [Defensive Positional Play](https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0138/6340/CEP_Tactical_Defensive_Positional_Play.pdf)

Today’s swift, wide-open style of hockey makes playing defense one of the most difficult positions to master on a hockey team. It is a position at which a player receives few accolades. But make a mistake, and he or she is sure to hear the jeers and sneers. However, defense is the backbone to sound team play because defenseman are responsible for initiating offensive attacks and also thwarting the opposition’s assaults. The days of placing the big, slow, clumsy player back on defense are gone. Today’s game requires a unique, intelligent, highly skilled and well-trained player back on the blue line. Many coaches select their best athletes to play defense, because they are the “quarterbacks” of a hockey team.

### [Defensive Team Play](https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0138/6342/CEP_Tactical_Defensive_Team_Play.pdf)

The two words that best describe team defense are “hard work.” Players generally like to play defense but often have a difficult time putting forth the effort necessary to make team defense effective. If each defensive player does his job, defense should be no worse than one-on-one times five. The three major problems that cause this to break down are (1) somebody does not stay one-on-one (e.g., a forechecker does not backcheck), (2) a highly-skilled offensive player beats a less-skilled defensive player, or (3) the offense has the advantage of knowing where it is going, how it will get there, and when. In each of these cases, the defense adjusts and someone tries to help out (which is a must). But usually doing so makes it possible for the offense to create a desired two-on-one situation.

### [Gap Control](https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0138/6343/CEP_Tactical_Gap_Control.pdf)

Gap control involves a high level of skill, intelligent decision making, discipline and the proper mental attitude. Perhaps the most important thing is to have coaches create practice environments that will continually improve the overall skill level, encourage problem solving and decision making and develop the proper mental approach.

### [Offensive Concepts](https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0138/6344/CEP_Tactical_Offensive_Concepts.pdf)

In this chapter, we will identify the key offensive concepts to assist in the development of team and individual offensive play.

### [Offensive Faceoffs](https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0138/6346/CEP_Tactical_Offensive_Faceoffs.pdf)

Faceoffs involve gaining possession of the puck in order to create scoring chances or eliminate a scoring chance from your opponent. There are many ways to accomplish these goals by your center winning the faceoff and by having your wings and defensemen move in to gain possession during a faceoff. All of the players reacting positively after losing a faceoff will allow them to have the opportunity to quickly regain possession of the puck.

### [Offensive Positional Play](https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0138/6347/CEP_Tactical_Offensive_Positional_Play.pdf)

The idea of teaching hockey players positional responsibilities and play is an important, yet difficult part of coaching. It is important to expose players to various offensive and defensive situations and practice them so that they become routine. Always leave room for the players to utilize their individual skills and imagination within the framework of the team’s philosophy and style of play.