

Active Start

Ages 0-6



Starting at infancy, parents must provide opportunities for children to be physically active every day in a safe, fun environment. Physical activity through play is an essential part of a child's development. Activity should incorporate fundamental movement skills in the 4 environments of that lead to physical literacy:

In the water: Swimming
On the ground: Athletics
In the air: Gymnastics
On ice and snow: Sliding (skiing, skating)

Physical Development:

- Provide physical activity everyday regardless of weather conditions
- Starting at infancy, provide infants, toddlers and preschoolers with opportunities to participate in daily physical activity that promotes fitness and movement skills for a minimum of 60 minutes a day
- Encourage play, as it is an essential part of physical and mental development
- Develop basic gross motor skills and coordination with large muscle groups through unstructured activity
- Develop basic movement skills such as running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing, catching, swimming, wheeling and skating that form the base of physical literacy. These motor skills are the building blocks of more complex movement and help lay the foundation for lifelong physical activity and athletic development

Psychological Development:

Activity is essential for development; among its benefits, physical activity enhances:

- Development of brain function
- Social skills
- Emotions, attitudes and imagination
- Confidence and positive self-esteem
- Stress reduction by quality of sleep

Design activities that help children to feel competent and comfortable participating in a variety of fun challenging sports and activities.

The Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) window of opportunity for this stage is the initiation of movement skills, running, jumping, kicking, throwing, catching, swimming, sliding etc.

Programs:

USA Hockey member clubs offer 6 & Under (Mite) programs as well as a first-year participant Learn to Play program.

USA Hockey's key focus for this stage:

- Help ensure our participants gain physical literacy
- Develop a passion for hockey in all children
- Encourage daily physical activity
- Provide the opportunity to explore a new surface (ice) and mode of locomotion (skating)

- Develop on-ice balance, coordination and agility
- Introduce basic skating movement skills through a Learn to Skate program
 - Preferably without use of a hockey stick

Training and Competitive Environment:

- **Training/Competition Ratio:** No formal competition, activity games and small area games should be incorporated in every ice session
- **Training Volume:** 1 to 2 times hockey per week, with session lengths no longer than 50 minutes at Learn to Play and 6 & Under (Mite) levels.
- **Training Year:** 4 weeks/month, 4 month/year
- **Team Composition:** Teams should consist of a maximum of 9 to 13 skaters. The goaltender position is excluded during this stage of development.
- **Team Structure:** Players can be grouped into teams of like abilities, with the overall focus on evenly distributing the player ability pool across all teams.
- **Competition format:** No formal competition

USA Hockey recommends that parents guide their children to be physically active in building a base of physical literacy

- **Structured and unstructured free play**
- **Activities that include swimming, running, jumping, balance, agility, gliding**

FUNDamentals

Ages 6-8 females

Ages 6-9 males



The objective of the FUNDamentals stage is to refine fundamental movement skills and begin to acquire basic sports skills. This is the time when a foundation is laid for future acquisition of more advanced skills.

General Description of the FUNDamentals stage:

- This is the stage where children learn physical literacy; the interrelationship between movement skills and sport skills.
- The skills that children acquire during this stage will benefit them when they engage in any activity regardless of their level of participation.
- By-passing the acquisition of 'basic and specialized movement' and 'sport skills' during the FUNDamentals stage is detrimental to a person's future participation in physical activity and sport (A, B, C'S = Agility, Balance, Coordination, Speed; gymnastics, swimming, running, gliding; throwing, striking, kicking).
- Basic sport skill development in this stage should be well structured, positive, and done in a FUN and social environment.
- All programs should be structured with proper progression, and monitored regularly by trained certified coaches, volunteers and parents.

USA Hockey's key focus for this stage:

- Help ensure our participants gain physical literacy
- Develop a passion for hockey in all our children (keep kids & families in the game)
- Encourage participation in a variety of complimentary sports to help our children maximize their ability to reach their genetic potential in hockey
- Develop on-ice balance, coordination, agility and speed
- Introduce basic puck control skills

Programs:

USAH Hockey member clubs offer 8 & Under, and 6 & Under (Mite) programs as well as a first year participant Learn to Play program.

Monitoring:

Children have not yet begun their growth spurt. It is helpful to keep track of annual height measurements to provide a baseline for future growth.

Coach and Instructor Recommendations:

Coaches must all have Level 1 USA hockey Coaching Education Program (CEP) certification, however it is recommended that additional 8 & Under (Mite) Coaching Program instruction be obtained. Coaches need a sound knowledge of child growth and development principles for this age group and have an understanding of physical literacy through LTAD. Competency at teaching basic skills is also a key component for coaches at this stage.

LTAD Window of Opportunity:

- First window for speed development at ages 6-8 for girls, ages 7-9 for boys (agility, quickness, change of direction).
- Suppleness, flexibility through out the stage
- Movement skills throughout

Components of the Hockey FUNdamentals Stage

Physical Development:

- Practice and master fundamental movement skills before sports specific skills are introduced (running, swimming, gliding, gymnastics)
- Emphasize the overall development of the athlete's physical capacities, fundamental movement skills and the ABC's of athleticism; agility, balance, coordination and speed.
- Bilateral balance must be well developed in this stage though sliding, skating and gliding sports (skating, rollerblading, two-ski water skiing, alpine and cross country skiing)
- Provide opportunities for physical activity daily (formal and informal)
- Teach appropriate and correct running, wheeling, jumping and throwing techniques using the ABC's of athleticism
- Introduce flexibility exercises
- Emphasize motor development to produce athletes who have a better trainability for long-term development
- Ambidextrous sports for developing refined motor skills:
 - *Athletics, gymnastics, swimming for the ABC's (agility, balance, coordination, speed and suppleness)*
 - *Soccer, hockey, basketball, tennis, baseball, lacrosse for developing catching, passing, kicking, striking*
 - *Biking, skiing, dancing for developing speed, balance and coordination*
- Movement in 3 planes of balance (linear, lateral, spatial & aerial)
- Initiation to physical training (warm-up and cool-down)

Focus:

- Introduce basic flexibility exercises
- Develop speed, power and endurance using activity-based games and small area hockey games - cross ice games
- Encourage participation in a wide range of sports
- Develop linear, lateral and multi-directional speed with the duration of repetitions less than 5 seconds
- Include strength training using the child's own body weight as well as medicine ball and Swiss ball exercises

Psychological Development:

- Develop reasoning skills through various sports and activities
- Provide opportunities for activities that:
 - Are FUN, positive and motivating
 - Are exploratory and allow for self-discovery
 - Build confidence through a high rate of success
 - Promote individual and group participation
 - **Maintain a 'No Excuses' atmosphere**
 - Introduce participants to simple rules and sport ethics (fair play)
- Ensure that games focus on participation

Training and Competitive Environment:

- **Training/Competition Ratio:** No formal competition
- **Training Volume:** Hockey two times per week, with session length no longer than 50 minutes in the Learn to Play Program. A third session at the 8 & Under level can be held for an informal competition - cross ice/half-ice games

- **Training Year:** 4 weeks/month, 5 months/year
- **Team Composition:** Teams should consist of a maximum of 9 to 13 skaters. The goaltender position is rotated among team members.
- **Team Structure:** All players should be evaluated as:
 - Advanced = top 33%
 - Intermediate = middle 33%
 - Beginner & Less Skilled = bottom 33%

Teams shall be divided into three groups of equal abilities for half-ice/cross-ice competition purposes. (Top 1/3; middle 1/3; Beginner & Less Skilled 1/3) Players shall be grouped into teams of like abilities, with the overall focus on evenly distributing the player ability pool across all teams.
- **Competition format:** All competitions are held cross-ice/half-ice with the focus on skill development not outcomes. At 8 & Under, the occasional jamboree can be held as a third ice touch for the week.
- **Overall activity ratios:** 25% hockey, 75% other sports and activities

8 & Under (Mites)

9 - 13 skaters per team; no full-time goalies

2 - 3 ice touches per week

50-minute ice sessions

20 weeks per season

= 50 - 60 ice touches per year

Minimum of 16 cross-ice/half-ice games and 34 practices

Maximum 20 cross-ice/half-ice games and 40 practices

At this stage it is important to create an environment where participants want to play hockey. They need to enjoy being at the rink and learning basic skills. Play lots of fun, competitive games. Lessons must be varied, interesting and fun so participants want to come back to the rink. End each session with a game, with the goal of having everyone leave the ice with a smile on their face. It is important to build interest in our sport and to provide self confidence and the enjoyment of performing. Keep in mind that early specialization in a late specialization sport such as hockey will not lead to greater performance later in life.

Coaching Considerations:

- Create a positive, fun and safe environment for the players
- Encourage active participation by all players
- Be clear and precise in communication and use terminology appropriate for the age
- Limit the amount of technical or tactical information to what is appropriate for the age
- Physical demonstration of basic sports skills must be done accurately to provide the proper imagery for players
- Ensure that the ice surface size is in proportion to the age - cross-ice games
- Ensure that the players have the appropriate equipment when on the ice under your supervision
- Have a well structured plan for each ice session
- Provide some opportunities that guarantee success for all participants
- Become knowledgeable with regard to the physical and mental capacities, and LTAD model for the age category group
- Encourage all forms of creativity
- Encourage parents and players to explore a wide range of other sports to assist in their long-term hockey development

- Include planned coordination exercises within training sessions both on and off ice

Equipment:

Proper sizing and fit of all equipment is essential for player safety and playing effectiveness.

- Skates - must fit properly; used are fine
- Helmet and Mask
- Gloves
- Wooden Stick - cut at the nose when standing on skates
- Shin Pads
- Elbow Pads
- Undergarment layers
- Protective Cup
- Hockey socks or sweat pants
- Garter belt or shorts w/ velcro to hold-up socks
- Hockey Pants
- Shoulder Pads - small & light weight
- Jersey

Technical Development:

Skating

- Ready position
- Forward stride
- 2 foot glide
- Forward turns
- Controlled stop
- Forward crossover
- Agility, balance and coordination
 - two feet and single foot skating
 - high knee run, multi directional
 - full body coordination; somersaults, roles jumps
 - Upper and lower body separation; skating with shoulder roles or exaggerated hand slides
- Forward start

Puck Control

- Lateral puck handling
- Forward-to-backward puck handling
- Diagonal puck handling
- Accelerating with the puck

Passing and Receiving

- Forehand
- Receiving – stick position, use of skates
- Eye contact

Shooting

- Wrist shot

Body Contact

- Body positioning in confrontational situations
- Angling skills
- Poke check
- Lift the stick check

Tactical Skills:

- Participants should learn how to listen and follow simple instructions
- Participants should engage in deliberate play and should learn basic decision making skills through activity games like tag and small area hockey games
- Competition at the puck – one-on-one battles and loose puck races for body positioning
- Participants should learn basic appropriate behavior within a team setting, such as how to support others and appropriate behavior in a locker room setting

Ancillary Skills:

- Off-ice training activities that provide several stations of purposeful games or activities
- Participation in other sport activities (gymnastics, public skating, alpine skiing, soccer, lacrosse, swimming)
- Participants, parents and support persons should be well informed about proper equipment for practice (equipment sizing, how to dress for training, water bottle for hydration, skate sharpening). Children should be able to dress themselves by the time they move into the 10 & Under (Squirt) age category.

Life Style:

- Key Concepts:
 - Fun
 - Safety
 - Social interaction
 - Creating a love of all sporting activities
 - Positive introduction to hockey
- Participate in hockey 2 to 3 times per week as long as there is **participation in other sports 4 to 6 times per week** to help insure future excellence.
- Because girls tend to be less active than boys, ensure that activities are gender neutral and inclusive so that active living is equally valued and promoted for all.
- Ensure that activities revolve around the school year and are enhanced by multi-sports though the spring, summer and winter holidays
- Healthy eating habits should be promoted
- Adequate sleep (American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 10 hours/night)

Learn to Train

Ages 8-11 females

Ages 9-12 males



The objective of the Learn to Train stage is to refine overall sport skills and develop sports specific skills.

General Description of the Learn to Train stage:

This is the period of accelerated learning of coordination and fine motor control and is the critical stage for the acquisition of hockey skills. At this stage participants are developmentally ready to acquire the sports skills that are the cornerstones of all athletic development.

In late specialization sports such as ice hockey, early specialization can be detrimental to later stages of skill development and refinement of the fundamental sports skills.

Participants should develop a solid base in a variety of sports in each of the physical literacy environments (e.g. swimming, athletics, gymnastics & skiing/ skating).

Club to club competitions should be introduced but they should not be the main focus of the program.

USA Hockey's key focus for this stage:

- Continue to develop physical literacy
- Continue to participate in 3 complimentary sports
- Participants at this stage should learn solid basic skills in skating and puck control
- There is no need at this stage to specialize at a specific skater position, however goalies may begin to focus on their position

Programs:

USA Hockey member clubs offer 10 & Under (Squirt) and 12 & Under (Peewee) programs at this stage.

Monitoring:

Children in this stage are often beginning their growth spurt. **Coaches and parents should keep track of regular height measurements** (every 3 months at 10 and Under (Squirt), every six weeks at 12 & Under (Peewee) to provide an indicator for the onset of peak height velocity (PVH). At the same time **flexibility, especially in the hamstrings and lower back should be monitored**. The growth spurt typically lasts 18 to 24 months.

Coach and Instructor Recommendations:

Level 2 CEP certification is required for coaching at the 10 & Under (Squirt) category, while a level 3 certification is needed to work at the 12 & Under Peewee level. Additional CEP training is encouraged for coaches working within these two levels as this is one of the two most important LTAD stages. **USA Hockey offers a checking skills workshop that is recommended for 12 & Under coaches.**

LTAD Window of Opportunity:

The Learn to Train and Train to Train stages are the most important stages in athletic preparation. During these stages **we make or break an athlete.**

- 'Sports skills' window of trainability is open during the entire phase
- Second 'speed' window for girls (ages 11-13+)
- Beginning of window for aerobic 'stamina' (girls 11-14, boys 12+)

Components of the Hockey Learn to Train Stage

Physical Development:

Mastering of fundamental sport skills

- Continue to encourage daily physical activity (formal and informal)
- Narrow focus to a **minimum of three sports**
- At this stage participants are ready to acquire the general sports skills and hockey skills that are the cornerstone of all athletic development
- Maintain and **refine ambidextrous sports or sport movements** (e.g. gymnastics, swimming, throwing with both hands, kicking with both feet, etc.)
- Participate in sports that require similar movement patterns

Monitor growth:

- Keep track of growth spurts by regularly measuring height (3 months) and looking for a sudden increase
- Growth spurt can last 18 to 24 months

Early in the stage, 10 & Under (Squirt), introduce general fitness framework

1. Warm-up
2. Rhythm and coordination runs both on and off the ice
3. Spatial awareness (jump distance with a number of changes in direction)
4. Rest and recovery (fuel breaks, meals, sleep)
5. Reaction time and agility
6. Focus on skill and execution
7. Cool down with short stretch and muscle rebalance - important because of rapid growth of bones and soft tissues

Later in stage, 12 & Under (Peewee), same as 1-7 plus the following

8. More speed work
9. Explosive strength in upper and low body through jumping and gymnastic maneuvers
10. Develop general lower body and core stability
11. More stretching at the end of training
12. Monitor the volume, intensity, quality and duration of training

Throughout the stage:

- Develop strength - using exercises that incorporate the player's own body weight, as well as medicine balls and Swiss balls
- Continue to develop endurance through small area games and relays and develop flexibility through exercises
- Speed can be developed by using activities that focus on agility, quickness and change of direction - short duration, less than 5 seconds

Psychological Development:

This is the sampling stage; provide opportunities for the participant to try activities that focus on fun, pleasure and socialization

Encourage goal setting that is process orientated:

- Long-term goals (dream ahead)
- Short-term goals based on skill development and not competitive results

Team Spirit; learn how to relate to different groups of peers

Important psychological skills to develop:

- Development of abilities to concentrate
- Development of visualization skills
- Deliberate effort; the ability to deliver effort and enjoy the feeling of the effort during the activity

- Responsibility; the ability to associate joy with effort and competition
- Success; the ability to take risk and accept failure as a normal occurrence of sport development
- Begin to introduce mental preparation

At this stage it is important to create an environment where participants want to play ice hockey. Practices must be varied, interesting and fun so they will want to continue. It is important to build interest in our sport, self confidence and an enjoyment of performing.

Training and Competitive Environment:

Formal competition can be introduced in this stage, although it must not divert the focus from training. Competitions should be limited to the local geographic area. Competition should be fun, and structured to address differences in training age and abilities. Athletes should be recognized for their success and achievement. Training should include small-area games to encourage the application of skill techniques in game play. Small-area games help develop a player's decision making abilities.

- **Training/Competition Ratio:** 70% training, 10% competition specific training (Exhibitions/Scrimmage Games), and 20% competition
- **Training Volume:** 3 to 4 times hockey per week, with session length of 60 minutes at 10 & Under level.
- **Training Year:** 4 weeks/month, 7 months/year - a double periodization calendar will aid structuring and help maintain player interest.
- **Team Composition:** Team composition will include a roster of 10-12 skaters and one goaltender at 10 & Under. The physiological aptitudes of players at this age can easily handle the playing requirements of competing every other shift. This will increase each player's individual puck touches within the competition and make the individual game more productive in player development terms.
- **Team Structure:** At 10 & Under, all players within the club should be grouped into teams of like abilities at two different levels, with the overall focus on evenly distributing the player ability pool across teams within in their skill level. Teams shall be divided into two groups of equal abilities for competition purposes (top 50%; bottom 50%). Training/practice sessions can include teams from both levels.
- **Competition format:** This is the stage when club to club competition can be introduced. Competitions are full ice for 10 & Under, with game length of 60 minutes.
- **Overall activity ratios:** 25% hockey, 25% fitness through sport, 50% other sports

10 & Under (Squirts):

95 - 100 total ice touches per year
 3 - 4 times per week for 60 minutes
 6 to 7 month season
 75 to 80 practices and 20 to 25
 10-12 skaters & one goalie per team

- **Training/Competition Ratio:** 70% training, 10% competition specific training, and 20% competition
- **Training Volume:** Hockey four times per week at 12 & Under (Peewee).
- **Training Year:** 4 weeks/month, 7 months/year - a double periodization calendar will aid structuring and help maintain player interest.
- **Team Composition:** At the 12 & Under level the roster size can expand to 15 skaters and two goalies.

- **Team Structure:** At 12 & Under, the club may begin to group players onto teams of like ability. While separation on ability is now allowed, the club must field more than one team at the highest level that the club participates in at the 12 & Under level. For example, if a club has enough players for three Peewee teams they would need to field two or more Peewee A teams before a B team. The club should balance the A teams in regards to talent level. The goal at this level is still the maximum individual development with a development process-driven model, not an outcome-based model.
- **Competition format:** Full-ice competitions for 12 & Under. With game length of 60 minutes.
- **Overall activity ratios:** 25% hockey, 25% fitness through sport, 50% other sports

12 & Under (Peewee):

105 - 120 total ice touches per year

4 times per week for 60 minutes

7 - month season

80 to 90 practices and 30 to 35 games

15 skaters and two goalies per team

Coaching Considerations

- Coaches must be cognizant that this is the critical stage for sports skill acquisition.
- Players must be exposed to quality skill demonstrations as this creates a mental picture for them to emulate.
- Players must practice a high volume of skills training at a reduced intensity in order to achieve successful repetitions. As the success rate increases, intensity can increase, however, coaches must understand that performing skills incorrectly at a high rate of speed will only reinforce poor skills through this stage.
- Coaches must understand that skill acquisition is reduced as the fatigue level increases
- Coaches must manage the flow of information to their players. Limit instruction to 4 or 5 key points maximum as additional information will not be processed by the athletes.
- Provide opportunities for the players to execute their skills in game situations. Players must begin to gain an understanding of how skills and tactics are applied within different playing situations.
- Provide opportunities for repeated decision making in practice. Solutions to common tactical situations must be developed.
- Coaches must provide concise, specific feedback to the athletes. Tell them what you want done, not what not to do.
- Monitor players growth for the onset of growth spurt, especially at the Peewee level.
- Introduce interval training

Technical Development:

Ensure motor learning issues are adopted into coaching practice

- ***This is the window of optimal trainability for peak skill development of core hockey skills***
- Emphasis is placed upon refining skating and puck control skills throughout the stage with a clear focus on correct technical execution
 - Agility in skating skills with and without the puck
 - Refining edge control skills for balance and coordination
 - Combine the refined skating skills with puck control skills (multi-tasking)
 - Attacking skills, one-on-one and one-on-two or more defenders (one-on-three)
- Use small area games to applying core skills in decision making situations

- Added emphasis on passing and receiving skills should be incorporated at the 12 and Under (Peewee) level with special concentration on receiving skills
- Added emphasis on shooting and scoring skills, including shooting off a pass (one timing the puck)
- Body contact and angling basics should be refined at 10 & Under (Squirt)
- Body checking skills are introduced at 12 & Under (Peewee) including the ability to deliver a check as well as receive a check (it is important not to overemphasize checking as to detract from core hockey skills development)
- Offensive body positioning and puck protection skills
- Deception skills should be incorporated in all facets of the player's development
 - Skating: change of pace, change of direction, spins
 - puck control: fakes and dekes on goalie
 - passing: look off pass receiver, fake pass
 - shooting: shoot off either foot, cadence - shoot in stride, camouflage - screen shots and looking off shot, fake shot

Tactical Skills:

- Continue to encourage unstructured play at 10 & Under (Squirt), emphasis should be on competing at the puck, winning one-on-one battles and loose puck races
- Introduce the four game situation roles; puck carrier, offensive support player, defender at the puck, defender away from the puck
- Develop basic situational role knowledge and experience in small area game play and specific situational drills
- Applying core skills in basic hockey decision making situations
- At 12 & Under basic team systems can be introduced, however the on-ice time spent should be minimal as to continue to take advantage of the skill development window of trainability
- Introduce elements of coordinated attacks, two-on-one, two-on-two, three-on-two, two-on-three
- Encourage vocal communication between players both offensively and defensively
- Reinforcement of ethics and rules (e.g. no hitting from behind)

Ancillary Skills:

At this stage, participants should understand the importance of warm-up and cool-down, hydration and of the proper fit and use of equipment

- Off-season participation in 2-3 other sports (soccer, lacrosse, gymnastics, skating, tumbling) is recommended to develop core strength and balance
- Players should be able to dress themselves in their hockey gear and tighten their own skates at 10 & Under (Squirt)
- Participants should be learning how to listen to and follow instructions

Life Style:

Fun, adventure, social, music and art

Expose the participant to a wide range of cultural and lifestyle opportunities

Instill an understanding of healthy training habits:

- Warm-up and cool-down
- Staying hydrated
- Rules and ethics of ice hockey
- Healthy diet

Instill an appreciation for healthy lifestyle:

- Importance of school and education
- Importance of family and friends
- Importance of daily physical education and sports

Train to Train

Ages 11-15 female
Ages 12-16 male



The objective of the Train to Train stage is to further develop sports specific skills, begin to introduce competition, and start to emphasize support training to continue development of speed, strength and stamina while maintaining flexibility.

General Description of the Train to Train stage:

This is a window of accelerated adaptation to aerobic, speed and strength training, and for maximum improvement in skill development. As well, good training habits are developed during this stage. Technical and fitness training programs should be individualized. While formal competition is included, the focus remains on learning the basics through training, with competition being of secondary importance. Training volume will increase as the athletes progress through the stage. Towards the end of this stage, athletes will likely begin to specialize in ice hockey. However, it is still recommended to participate in at least 1 complimentary sport.

USA Hockey's key focus for this stage:

Building the physical engine - endurance, speed and core strength

- Develop strong technical skills
- Begin to become more specialized in hockey late in this stage

USA Hockey Programs:

USA Hockey's member clubs can offer Tier 1 and Tier 2 competitive teams as well as Hockey for Life programs that meet each individual's ability and commitment levels in both the 14 & Under (Bantam) and 16 & Under (Midget) classifications. At 14, 15 and 16, USA Hockey also runs National Player Development Camps for both boys and girls. This is also the stage where USA Hockey has its NTDP - High Performance Clubs.

At the age of 16 is when players first have the opportunity to make a youth level U.S. National Team (U17), either through the National Player Development Camp or the National Team Development Program (NTDP)

Monitoring:

Note that both aerobic and strength trainability are dependent on the maturation levels of the athlete. For this reason, the timing of training emphasis differs depending on whether athletes are early, average, or late maturers. Monitoring for PHV is crucial as almost all participants will move through their major growth spurt during this stage.

- Consider growth spurt in programming. A decrease in coordination may be expected during this stage. Measure for PHV every 3 months.
- Monitor flexibility and emphasize flexibility training given the rapid growth of bones, tendons, ligaments, and muscles
- Monitor general endurance throughout the stage

Coach and Instructor Recommendations:

Level 3 CEP certification is required for coaching at the 14 & Under (Bantam) and 16 & Under (Midget) level. Tier 1 and Tier 2 national tournament bound 16 & Under (Midget) coaches need Level 4 CEP certification. Additional CEP training and continuing education is encouraged for coaches working within USA Hockey's high performance clubs or any other coach who wishes to improve their craft.

LTAD Window of Opportunity:

The Learn to Train and Train to Train stages are the most important stages of athlete preparation. During these stages we make or break an athlete!

- Increased strength is optimized for girls 1-2 months after peak of PHV
- Increased strength is optimized for boys 12-18 months after peak of PHV
- The endurance window is between 11 and 15 years old of age
- The second speed window for boys is between 13 and 16 years old, and for girls is between 11 and 13 years

Components of the Hockey Train to Train Stage

Physical Development:

Stabilization and Foundation Building:

Proper and regular monitoring of physiological adaptation to training is essential. Continue monthly monitoring for PHV. The average age for girls reaching PHV is 12, for boys, 14. PHV is the reference point to begin a strength training program.

Continue participation in complementary sports for:

- Skill
- Speed
- Endurance
- Lifestyle

Introduce Specific Fitness Framework

Early in stage, off-ice training focuses on the following:

- Introduce free weights
- Injury prevention exercises (high reps, low intensity, focus on execution)
- Core and stabilizer strength
- Explosive arm and leg power
- Maximize speed development
- Introduction to physical testing and functional assessments two times a year

Further in stage:

- Maximum strength (females and early developing males)
- Strength endurance
- Power/speed endurance
- Build a level of fitness that allows the athlete to maintain high volume, high quality training
- On-ice and off-ice training to develop endurance
- Maximize stamina/aerobic capacity window of trainability for recovery, regeneration and training capacity
- Monitor training for high volume, low intensity sessions

Throughout the stage:

- Provide variation in off-ice and on-ice activities to avoid over-use injuries
- Emphasize flexibility and stretching exercises to manage the effect of rapid growth
- With rapid growth and changes in body proportions, athletes may need to re-learn some skills that were previously refined (adolescent maintenance)

Psychological Development:

Provide training and competition opportunities that focus performance on a preferred position (Forward, Defense, Goalie). Mental skills learned in the previous stage of athlete

development should continue to be practiced and incorporated into all types of training and competitive situation.

The athlete should:

- Take personal responsibility for training, preparation, performance and recovery
- Bring consistent effort to training and competitions
- Become involved with coaches in decision making (e.g. goals, position specific development, training plan)
- Identify “what works” in the ideal performance state
- Be coachable - accept constructive criticism and work with other coaches or athletes

Continue basic mental skills development:

- coping strategies, goal setting, imagery, self-awareness
- Be introduced to the idea of self-reflection after training or competitions
- Have a training diary
- Athletes in this stage are ready to learn how to focus. They can understand that what they feel and think affects their performance, and learn how to develop control over these feelings and thoughts.
- Effective goal setting becomes more important in this stage and is related to outcomes, process and performance
- Introduce athletes to breathing and relaxation skills
- Teach athletes how to communicate effectively with coaches and how to ask for feedback

Training and Competitive Environment:

Standard Track

- **Training/Competition Ratio:** 60% training, 10% competition specific training, and 30% competition
- **Training Volume:** 3 to 4 times hockey per week, with session length of 60 to 80 minutes at 14 & Under (Bantam) and 16 & Under (Midget) levels. Training volume can be reduced for the Hockey for Life category based on the commitment level of the players involved.
- **Training Year:** 4 weeks/month, 7-8 month/year - Single or double periodization calendar will aid structuring and help maintain player interest
- **Team Composition:** Team composition will include a roster of 16 skates and 2 goaltenders. (10 forwards, 6 defensemen, 2 goalies).
- **Team Structure:** Teams in these age groups can group players of like ability with out restrictions. Teams can be registered at the Tier 1, Tier 2 or Hockey for Life Level.
- **Competition format:** Game formats may vary to fit within the allotted ice time
- **Overall activity ratios:** 40% hockey, 30% fitness, 30% other sports
- **Complimentary Sports:** Athletes are encouraged to participate in 1-2 complimentary sports

14 & Under and 16 & Under TII:

105 total ice touches

3 - 4 times per week for 60 to 80 minutes

7 - 8 months

80 - 85 practices and 35 to 40 games

16 skaters and 2 goalies per team

High Performance Track

- **Training/Competition Ratio:** 60% training, 10% competition specific training (exhibition/scrimmage games), and 30% competition.

- **Training Volume:** 4 to 5 times hockey per week, with session length of 60 to 80 minutes at 14 & Under (Bantam) and 16 & Under (Midget) levels. Begin strength training two times per week to coincide with Peak Height Velocity. Speed training 2-3 times per week.
- **Training Year:** 4 weeks/month, 9 months/year - Double periodization calendar will aid structuring and help maintain player interest
- **Team Composition:** Team composition will include a roster of 16 skaters and two goaltenders. (10 forwards, six defensemen, two goalies).
- **Team Structure:** Teams in these age groups are made up of players of like ability with out restrictions.
- **Competition format:** 14 & Under (Bantams) with 2.0 hour ice time play 17-minute stop-time period games with one ice resurface after the second period. 16 & Under (Midget) with 2.5 hours ice time shall play 20-minute stop-time period games with one ice resurface after the first period and a second ice resurface after the second period. 16 & Under (Midget) with two-hour ice time shall play 18-minute stop-time period games with one ice resurface after the first period and a second ice resurface after the second period.
- **Overall activity ratios:** 45% hockey, 35% fitness, 20% other sports
- **Complimentary Sports:** Athletes are encouraged to participate in at least one complimentary sport

14 & Under and 16 & Under High Performance:

~160 total ice touches

4 - 5 per week

9 - Months

120 - 130 practices and 40 to 50 games

16 skaters and two goalies per team

Coaching Considerations:

- Coaches should still spend significant amount of time refining technical skills, but the emphasis we gradually change to increase the both the difficulty and intensity.
- Use both high volume/lower intensity training and high intensity/low volume training.
- Include more skill execution in tactical situations, skills must be used in combination with decision making
- Tactics and strategy must be appropriate for the age but the volume of information presented at this stage will increase with age.
- Coaches should plan training loads with consideration to the athletes competition, rest and recovery
- Attention to individual growth patterns of players must be considered during this stage and the coach must be able to take advantage of the relative training windows

Technical Development:

- Continue to refine skating skills
- Introduce position specific skills
 - Forwards
 - Defenseman
 - Goalies
- Continue to develop deceptive skills

Tactical Skills:

- Playing the off-wing or off-side defenseman positions

- Offensive support concepts
- Defensive support concepts
- Introduce basic team systems of defensive zone coverage and aggressive forecheck,
- Introduce active read-and-react penalty killing
- Introduce power play concepts without specific individual positions, encourage interchangeability
- Emphasize transition play - offense to defense and defense to offense
- Emphasize quality playing habits
- At the 16 & Under (Midget) level, begin to introduce adaptations to various overall team strategies

On-ice time should be spent on 70% offensive skills, tactics, and concepts, and 30% defensive skills, tactics, and concepts.

Ancillary Skills:

- Athletes in this stage should be responsible for doing a proper warm-up and cool-down as part of practice
- They should also be developing a competition warm-up procedure
- Athletes should be aware of the importance of proper nutrition and hydration for competition days

Life Style:

Optimize training and education in:

- Cultural and lifestyle habits
- Smoke & tobacco free environment
- Alcohol free environment
- Drug-free sport
- Wearing proper safety equipment
- Care and maintenance of equipment
- Proper nutrition, hydration and recovery
- Self-management
- Taking responsibility for actions
- Respect for others
- The Code of Conduct for USA Hockey

Learn to Compete

Ages 15-18 female

Ages 16-18 male



The objective of the Learn to Compete stage is to prepare athletes for the competitive environment, continue to refine technical skills, ancillary skills and develop the physical attributes.

General Description of the Learn to Compete stage:

All the objectives of the Train to Train stage must be achieved before the objectives of Learn to Compete can begin. This is the time to optimize fitness preparation and skills and to begin to specialize in ice hockey. Training should be individualized to the athlete's particular needs in skill development, mental preparation, fitness and recovery. During this stage, training volume will increase, as does training intensity. Competitions and tournaments become more important and the focus shifts to performance. Athletes learn to prepare for competition, and learn to handle competitive pressures in any situation. The training season is longer, and event-specific. This is the time to consolidate individual strengths and rectify weaknesses.

USA Hockey's key focus for this stage:

- Refine technical skills
- Gain confidence in a variety of competitive situations
- Good decision-making skills
- Make appropriate and measurable improvements in endurance, speed and strength

USA Hockey Programs:

USA Hockey's member clubs can offer Tier 1 and Tier 2 competitive teams as well as Hockey for Life programs that meet each individual's ability and commitment 18 & Under (Midget) classification. 16 and 17, USA Hockey also runs National Player Development Camps for both boys and girls. USA Hockey also has its NTDP - High Performance Clubs at this level.

At the age of 17, players have the opportunity to make a youth level U.S. National U18 Team, either through the National Player Development Camp or the National Team Development Program. The U18 age level is the initial age where the International Ice Hockey Federation holds an official world championship event.

Monitoring:

- Monitor development of endurance, strength and speed
- Monitor fitness - endurance, core strength, flexibility

LTAD Window of Opportunity:

- Speed Window #2 for Boys early in stage
- Strength Window for boys is 12-18 months after PHV

Coach and Instructor Recommendations:

Level 3 CEP certification is required for coaching at the 18 & Under Midget level. Tier 1 and Tier 2 national tournament bound 18 & Under (Midget) coaches need a Level 4 CEP certification. Additional CEP training and continuing education is encouraged for coaches working within USA Hockey's high performance clubs or any coach who wishes to improve their craft.

Components of the Hockey Learn to Compete Stage:

Physical Development:

Optimize endurance, strength and speed training.

- The athlete must have sufficient levels of fitness to withstand the demands of training and competition without sustaining injuries or burnout.
- Develop individualized programs for fitness and recovery
- Ensure progressive overload in training

Psychological Development:

- The athlete should have well-developed mental preparation skills, and should continue to refine these skills
- Competition becomes more important and athletes must learn to perform on demand
- Training and practice in mental preparation will help the athlete cope with the stresses associated with training, tournaments and selection, and will contribute to their overall development as competitive athletes.
- Athletes should have input in setting training goals and priorities, and should be included in decision-making process.
- Athletes are capable of self-coaching and should be encouraged to think for themselves, rather than relying solely on coach feedback

Training and Competitive Environment:

Standard Track

- **Training/Competition Ratio:** 50% training, 10% competition specific training, and 40% competition
- **Training Volume:** 3 to 4 times hockey per week, with session length of 60 to 90 minutes at 18 & Under (Midget) level. Training volume can be reduced for the Hockey for Life category based on the commitment level of the players involved. Fitness three times per week.
- **Training Year:** 4 weeks/month, 7 month/year - Single or double periodization calendar will aid structuring and help maintain player interest
- **Team Composition:** Team composition will include a roster of 18 skaters and 2 goaltenders. (12 forwards, 6 defensemen, 2 goalies).
- **Team Structure:** Teams in these age groups can group players of like ability with out restrictions. Teams can be registered at the Tier 1, Tier 2 or Hockey for Life Level.
- **Competition format:** Game formats may vary to fit within the allotted ice time
- **Overall activity ratios:** 50% hockey, 40% fitness, 10% other sports
- **Complimentary Sports:** Athletes are encouraged to participate in 1 complimentary sport

18 & Under (Midget) Tier II:

115 total ice touches

3 - 4 times per week for 60 to 80 minutes

7 - 8 months

80 - 85 practices and 40 to 50 games

18 skaters and 2 goalies per team

High Performance Track

- **Training/Competition Ratio:** 50% training, 10% competition specific training, and 40% competition
- **Training Volume:** 5 to 6 times hockey per week, with session length of 60 to 90 minutes at 18 & Under Midget level. 4 to 6 fitness sessions per week with account for strength development phase.

- **Training Year:** 4 weeks/month, 9-10 month/year - Double periodization calendar will aid structuring and help maintain player interest
- **Team Composition:** Team composition will include a roster of 16 skates and 2 goaltenders. (12 forwards, 6 defensemen, 2 goalies).
- **Team Structure:** Teams in these age groups are made up of players of like ability with out restrictions.
- **Competition format:** 18 & Under (Midget) with 2.5 hours ice time shall play 20-minute stop-time period games with one (1) ice resurface after the first period and a second ice resurface after the second period. 18 & Under Midget with 2.0 hour ice time shall play 18-minute stop-time period games with one (1) ice resurface after the first period and a second ice resurface after the second period.
- **Overall activity ratios:** 60% hockey, 40% fitness
- **Complimentary Sports:** Athletes are encouraged to participate in outside sporting recreation

18 & Under (Midget) High Performance:

~200+ total ice touches

5 - 6 per week

10 months

140 - 150 practices and 50-60 games

18 skaters and 2 goalies per team

Coaching Consideration:

- Coaches must plan with regard to training volume and intensity taking into consideration competition and rest and recovery
- Preparation must be detailed and well communicated
- Learning to compete within a team structure, placing team before self
- Intensity of training is high
- On and Off ice decision-making skills are of a high priority during this stage.
- Team play and accountability to the team must always be enforced.
- Players must be able to transfer the decisions made in practice to competition.
- Emphasis on speed of execution
- Emphasis on off-ice training

Technical Development:

- Refinement of skills at a high speed
- Execution of skills must be details and performed in tactical situations

Tactical Skills:

- Speed of transition from offense to defense and defense to offense
- Speed of decision making skills

Ancillary Skills:

- Ensure that key support systems (fitness monitoring, recovery and regeneration, psychology, nutrition and health needs) are in place and integrated with the training program.
- Regular, year-round aerobic and strength training
- Athletes should refine and individualize their own ancillary capacities

Life Style:

- Refine the skills listed in the Train to Train stage.
- Athlete assumes increasing responsibility for managing his/her competitive and training schedules, deadlines, registrations etc.
- Athlete assumes responsibility for his/her own behavior as representative of USA Hockey, his/her club, state and country.

Hockey For Life

Enter at any Age



The objective is to enjoy life long physical activity in hockey through participation and recreation.

In this stage child participants are encouraged to:

- Enjoy the sport and have the opportunity to learn the basic skills of the game
- Participate for the FUN of the game
- Experience the benefits of being part of a team, making friends while playing the coolest game on earth
- Kids should have the opportunity to move into the competitive track, if in time, they decide to

In this stage adult participants are encouraged to:

- Make the transition from competitive to recreational hockey
- Participate in age group competitions such as 30+, 40+, 50+ tournaments
- Enter sports related careers such as coaching, officiating, sports administration
- Give back to the sport through volunteering

A positive experience through sport is the key to retaining athletes after they leave the competitive stream.

USA Hockey offers recreational programs for all ages and ability levels:

- Youth recreational leagues at all levels up to 18 & Under (Midgets)
- Adult leagues
- USA Hockey Adult Recreational Tournaments
- Adult National Championships
- Pond Hockey Tournaments / Alternative Playing Opportunities
- Adult Skills Clinics

Components of the Hockey for Life Stage

Physical Development:

- Keep active through participation in hockey
- Continue training to maintain endurance, strength and flexibility

Psychological Development:

- Re-adjust to less competitive environment
- Relaxation
- Involvement for fun, fitness and challenge

Training and Competitive Environment:

- Maintain ongoing active participation in sport 30 minutes per day or 60 minutes three times per week as recommended by guidelines for physical activity
- Enter tournaments that are of appropriate skill level
- Opportunities to continue skill development

Equipment and Facilities:

- Equipment should be properly fitted and matched to the athletes' ability level, goals and to provide adequate safety

Technical Development:

- Retain skills or develop new skills
- No injuries
- Still having fun

Tactical Skills:

- Continued involvement at the recreational level in hockey and other sports
- More focus on development of hockey for others (volunteer, coach, official, administrator)

Ancillary Skills:

- Ensure new participants receive instruction about the benefits of regular physical activity, proper warm-up, cool down, safety, nutrition and hydration

Life Style:

- Pursue family and personal goals
- Continue education about our sport
- Continue involvement as volunteer, coach, official, administrator
- Re-set goals, apply the skills and lessons developed through sport into life (leadership, problem solving, critical thinking)