

Learn to Train (10U & 12U)
Ages 8-11 females
Ages 9-12 males



USA Hockey Programs

USA Hockey member clubs offer 10 & Under and 12 & Under programs at this stage.

Objective

Develop overall athleticism and sports specific skills.

General Description of the Learn to Train stage

At this stage, participants continue to develop movement abilities across multiple sports and in a wide variety of environments. In ice hockey, players continue to increase their attunement to the appropriate environmental cues that allow them greater movement adaptability and hockey sense.

In late specialization sports such as ice hockey, early specialization can be detrimental to later stages of development. 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 can be introduced but competition results should not be the main focus of the program. Focus should remain on long-term athlete and hockey development.

USA Hockey's key focus for the Learn to Train stage

- Continue to develop physical literacy
- Continue to participate in at least 2 or 3 complementary sports
- Participants at this stage should learn basic skating, puck control and team play
- There is no need at this stage to specialize at a specific skater position, however, goalies may begin to focus on their position

Components of Athlete Development: USA Hockey Learn to Train stage

Technical Development

- **This is a focused stage of hockey specific skill development**
- Ensure motor learning issues are adopted into coaching practice
- Emphasis is placed upon refining skating and puck control throughout the stage
 - Agility in skating skills with and without the puck
 - Refining edge control skills for balance and coordination
 - Attacking skills, one-on-one and one-on-two or more defenders (one-on-three)
- Use small-area games to develop core skills in decision-making situations
- Added emphasis on passing and receiving should be incorporated at the 12-and-Under level with special concentration on receiving from variable situations
- 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

- Body-checking skills are introduced at 12 & Under including the ability to deliver a check as well as receive a check
- Offensive body positioning and puck protection
- Deception 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; 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
- Continued exposure to basic hockey decision-making situations
- At 12 & Under basic team systems can be introduced, however, the on-ice time spent should be minimal
- 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, no head contact, no contact with vulnerable player)

Physical Development

10 & Under

Fundamental movement skills (FMS) and mastering of fundamental sport skills (FSS) through warmups, games, obstacle courses, unstructured play and some structured activities; Continue to encourage daily physical activity (formal and informal); Maintain and refine ambidextrous sports or sport movements (e.g. gymnastics, swimming, throwing with both hands, kicking with both feet, etc.).

- Strength: Athletes may need to start with body weight/light resistance training with focus on technique progressing to moderate loads & free weight training with focus remaining on technique. Core strength training (planks and med ball rotations). Depending on qualified instruction, athletes can also be taught Olympic lifts and variations for power development focusing on technique.
- Power: More intense FMS such as running, skipping, hopping and jumping with high velocity movements; may include low intensity plyometrics; low eccentric loading (examples of low eccentric loading are jumps in place, standing jumps)
- Speed: primary focus on sprint technique over short distances with more formal drills, but do not discontinue games that involve speed
- Agility: Primary focus on change of direction speed development (40%); less focus on FMS (30%) but increase focus on reactive agility (30%)

- Conditioning: Mastery of sport-specific skill thru deliberate practice and play; combination of small-sided games and HIIT; 2-5x per week, 10—30 min per session

Note: Off-ice training techniques are important for safety. Dynamic sports like ice hockey require a wide range of movements that are NOT confined to a specific idealized technique and a high degree of movement variability is encouraged where safety is not compromised.

12 & Under

- Strength: Depending on previous training (training age), athlete may need to start with body weight/light resistance training with focus on technique, but they should be progressing to moderate loads & free weight training with focus remaining on technique; core strength training (planks and med ball rotations); depending on qualified instruction, athletes can also be taught Olympic lifts and variations for power development focusing on technique.
- Power: accomplished more intense FMS such as running, skipping, hopping and jumping with high velocity movements and may include low intensity plyometrics; low eccentric loading; jumps in-place, standing jumps; should also be accomplished with strength training including some low-to-moderate load with high velocity and rate of force development
- Speed: Sprint technique + maximal sprints; emphasis on coordination pre-PHV and hypertrophy post-PHV (early maturers); Greater focus on strength + plyos for off-ice and on-ice speed development
- Agility: Primary focus on change of direction speed development (40%); less focus on FMS (30%) but increase focus on reactive agility (30%)
- Conditioning: Mastery of sport-specific skill thru deliberate practice and play; Combination of small-sided games and HIIT; 2-5x per week, 10—30 min per session

Note: Off-ice training techniques are important for safety. Dynamic sports like ice hockey require a wide range of movements that are NOT confined to a specific idealized technique and a high degree of movement variability is encouraged where safety is not compromised.

Psychological Development

- 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.
- 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 12U

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
- Participants should be learning how to listen to and follow instructions

Lifestyle

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

- Fun, adventure, social, music and art

Instill an understanding of healthy training habits

- Warm-up and cool-down
- Importance of strength and conditioning for performance and injury prevention
- Healthy diet and staying hydrated
- Rules and ethics of ice hockey

Instill an appreciation for healthy lifestyle

- Importance of school and education
- Importance of family and friends
- Importance of daily physical activity and sports
- Importance of nutrition and sleep

Monitoring

- Keep track of growth by regularly measuring height (3 months) and looking for a sudden increase. The onset of the adolescent growth spurt occurs on average at about 9-10 years of age in girls and 11 years of age in boys. The age at maximum growth is on average 12 years of age for girls and 14 years of age for boys. The adolescent growth spurt can last 18 to 24 months. However, there is considerable individual variation in both the timing and tempo of the growth spurt.
- As training and competition intensifies during 12U, the training load and athlete health and recovery should be monitored. Furthermore, the adolescent growth spurt can also result in adolescent awkwardness and also increase the risk of injury.

Training and Competitive Environment

Formal competition can be introduced in this stage, although it must not divert the focus from a developmental process. 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 adaptability of skill in game play. Small-area games help develop a player's decision making abilities.

10 & Under	
Training/Competition Ratio	75% training and 25% competition
Training Volume	3 to 4 times hockey per week. Session length of 60-75 minutes.
Total # of sessions	95 – 100 ice touches per season
# Practices	75-80 practices
# Competitions	20-25 games
Training Year	6-7 months/year
Team Composition	10-12 skaters and one goaltender. The physiological abilities of players at this age to recover quickly allows them to easily handle the playing requirements of competing every other shift. This will also increase each player's individual puck touches within the competition and make the individual game more productive in terms of player development.
Team Structure	All players within the club should be grouped into teams of like abilities, with the overall focus on evenly distributing the player ability pool across teams within in their skill level. Training/practice sessions should include teams from each level. Position sampling is highly encouraged.
Competition format	This is the stage when club-to-club competition can be introduced
Overall activity ratios	25% hockey, 25% fitness through sport, 50% other sports
Complementary Sports	Athletes are highly encouraged to participate in several sports and activities

12 & Under	
Training/Competition Ratio	70% training and 30% competition
Training Volume	4 times hockey per week. Session length of 60-75 minutes.
Total # of sessions	105 – 120 total ice touches per season
# Practices	80-90 practices

# Competitions	30-35 games
Training Year	7 months/year
Team Composition	15 skaters and two goalies per team. Continue to allow position sampling.
Team Structure	The club may begin to group players onto teams of like ability. While separation on ability is now allowed, the club should try to field multiple teams at the same level. For example, if a club has enough players for three Peewee teams they should try to balance teams. 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 to 90 minutes.
Overall activity ratios	25% hockey, 25% fitness through sport, 50% other sports
Complementary Sports	Athletes are highly encouraged to participate in several sports and activities

Quality Coaching

General Considerations

- 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 2 or 3 key points maximum as additional information will not be processed well by the athletes.
- Provide opportunities for the players to execute their skills in game-like situations. Players must begin to gain an understanding of how tactics are applied within different playing situations.
- Provide opportunities for repeated decision making in practice and finding solutions to common tactical situations.
- Coaches must provide concise, specific feedback to the athletes.
- Engage players by asking them questions about the playing environment and how they feel, let them provide the answers whenever possible.
- Monitor player's growth for the onset of growth spurt, especially at the 12-and-Under level.

Coach and Instructor Recommendations

- Coaches must all have the appropriate level of USA Hockey Coaching Education Program (CEP) certification and completed the following:
 - On-line coaching module for the age category being coached
 - Background check
 - Completed the United States Center for Safe Sport online program
 - Current year membership registration with USA Hockey

- USA Hockey has complete body-checking materials available and implementation of body contact and body checking training is recommended for 12 & Under coaches.