

**Train to Train (14U & 16U)**  
**Ages 11-15 female**  
**Ages 12-16 male**



### **USA Hockey Programs**

USA Hockey's member clubs can offer Tier 1 and Tier 2 competitive teams as well as Travel and Hockey for Life programs that meet each individual's ability and commitment levels in both the 14 & Under and 16 & Under classifications. At 14, 15 and 16 years of age, USA Hockey also runs District or National Player Development Camps for both boys and girls. This is also the stage where USA Hockey has its National Team Development Program.

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).

Adolescents (around 15-17 years) that have developed the physical, cognitive, social, emotional and motor skills needed may decide to invest their effort into highly specialized training in one sport.

### **Objective**

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**

Good practice and training habits are developed during this stage. On-ice and fitness training programs should be individualized. While formal competition is included, the focus remains on learning the basics through training, with competition results being of secondary importance. Training volume will increase as 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 one complementary sport.

Sampling and Specialization: Although it is encouraged that athletes continue to participate in complementary sports for overall athletic development, lifestyle and social aspects, this is also the age when children should have the opportunity to either choose to specialize in a favorite sport or continue in sports at a recreational level. During late adolescent years (15-17) they have developed the physical, cognitive, social and emotional and motor skills needed to invest their effort into highly specialized training in one sport.

### **USA Hockey's Key Focus for the Train to Train Stage**

- Build the physical engine
- Develop strong adaptive technical skills
- Begin to become more specialized in hockey late in this stage

## **Components of Athlete Development: USA Hockey Train to Train Stage**

### **Technical Development**

- Continue to refine skating skills
- Introduce position specific skills
  - Forwards
  - Defenseman
  - Goalies
- Continue to develop deceptive skills
- Encourage players to develop the skills of each position so they become more versatile with the game

### **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 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.
- Encourage the interchangeability of positions and roles of players within the game

### **Physical Development**

#### **14U**

- Fundamental movement skills (FMS) incorporated in dynamic warm-up and fun speed, agility and conditioning games. With rapid growth and changes in body proportions, athletes may need to re-learn some skills that were previously refined (adolescent maintenance)
- Strength and Power Development: Depending on previous training (training age) and instruction, an athlete may need to start with body-weight/light resistance training with focus on technique and progressing to moderate-to-heavy loads. This is a key period for strength and power development. More advanced concepts can be applied if appropriate training age and qualified instruction such as eccentric-based training, complex training, velocity-based training and Olympic lifts and variations for power development.
- Plyometrics: Moderate intensity plyometrics; multiple 2-foot hopping & jumping; 1-2x per week

- Speed: Primary focus on sprint technique with more formal drills but do not discontinue games that involve speed; increase stride length & decrease ground reaction time (the latter through low-intensity plyometrics)
- Agility: Primary focus on change of direction speed development (40%); less focus on FMS (30%) but increased focus on reactive agility (30%)
- Conditioning: Mastery of sport-specific skill through deliberate practice and play; Combination of small-sided games and HIIT; 2-5x per week, 10-30 minutes 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.

### 15U-16U

- FMS incorporated in dynamic warm-up and fun speed, agility and conditioning games.
- Strength and Power Development: Depending on previous training (training age) and instruction, athlete may need to start with body weight/light resistance training with focus on technique progressing to moderate-to-heavy loads. This is a key period for strength and power development. More advanced concepts can be applied if appropriate training age and qualified instruction such as eccentric-based training, complex training, velocity-based training and Olympic lifts and variations for power development.
- Maximal power and rate of force production in periodized manner; strength training + plyometrics
- Plyometrics: Moderate-to-high intensity plyometrics; multiple 2-foot hopping & jumping; box jumps; hurdle jumps (low intensity also appropriate) 1-2x per week
- Speed: Maximal speed; strength training focused on maximal strength + explosive exercises; complex training, plyometrics & strength training/explosive lifts
- Agility: Primary focus on reactive agility (60%); incorporation of FMS (20%) and change of direction (20%) technique thru warmups
- Conditioning: Acquisition of expertise through deliberate practice; combination of small-sided games, HIIT and repeat sprints

**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

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

### **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

### **Lifestyle**

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

### **Monitoring**

- Monitoring for PHV is crucial as almost all participants will move through their major growth spurt during this stage. Measure for PHV every 3 months.
- Consider growth spurt in programming. A decrease in coordination may be expected during this stage, and an increase in injury.
- Assessment of fitness and athleticism can continue to inform programming.

- Athlete health and well-being and recovery should be monitored.

## Training and Competitive Environment

<b>High Performance Track 14U &amp; 16U</b>	
<b>Training/Competition Ratio</b>	65% training and 35% competition
<b>Training Volume</b>	4-5 times hockey per week. Session length of 60 to 80 minutes at 14 & Under and 16 & Under levels.
<b>Total # of sessions</b>	~160 total ice touches
<b># Practices</b>	120 – 130 practices
<b># Competitions</b>	40-50 games
<b>Training Year</b>	9 months/year – Single or double periodization calendar will aid structuring and help maintain player interest
<b>Team Composition</b>	16 skaters (10 forwards, 6 defensemen) and 2 goaltenders
<b>Team Structure</b>	Teams in these age groups can group players of like ability without restrictions. Teams can be registered at the Tier 1, Tier 2, Travel or Hockey for Life Level.
<b>Competition format</b>	14 & Under can play 17-minute stop-time period games. 16 & Under can play 20-minute stop-time period games.
<b>Overall activity ratios</b>	45% hockey, 35% fitness, 20% other sports
<b>Complementary Sports</b>	Athletes are encouraged to participate in at least one complementary sport

## Quality Coaching

### General Considerations

- Coaches should still spend significant amount of time refining adaptable technical skills (greater attunement to the playing environment), modifying both the difficulty and intensity
- Use both high volume/lower intensity training and high intensity/low volume training
- Tactics and strategy must be appropriate for the age but the volume of information presented at this stage will increase with age and competence
- Coaches should plan training loads with consideration to the athlete's competition, rest and recovery
- Attention to individual growth patterns of players must be considered during this stage

### 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
- Additional CEP training and continuing education is encouraged for coaches working within USA Hockey's high performance program or any other coach who wishes to improve their craft.