

MITE PROGRAM - WHAT'S YOUR HOCKEY AGE?

Starting with the 2023-24 hockey season, GAHA will be transitioning from the traditional mini mite/mite format, to an all mite format. This effort is to allow for new and younger players to be grouped with like-skilled players. The goal is to maximize practice and game efficiency and allow all players the best instruction and skill development available.

To be eligible to participate in the Mite program a player must have a "Hockey Age" between 4 and 8 years old. To be considered eligible as a 5-year-old and participate at the Mite level, your player must turn 5 prior to June 1 of the current season. For example, if your player is currently 4 years old, he/she would have to turn 5 before June 1st, 2024.

Likewise, Mite players must not be older than 8 years old as of June 1st of the current registration year. See the Blue Book for the Mite birthdate range. For each season, the Hockey Age classifications are:

HOCKEY AGE

Hockey Age 5 - Four years of Mite eligibility

Hockey Age 6 - Three years of Mite eligibility

Hockey Age 7 - Two years of Mite eligibility

Hockey Age 8 - Last year of Mite eligibility

MITE PROGRAM - SKILL LEVELS

Similar to other skill driven sports such as martial arts, gymnastics and swimming, the Mite hockey program is most appropriately organized by skill level rather than by age. Unlike other sports, the unusual playing field for the game of hockey - ice - as well as the speed of the game can be very intimidating for young children. For these reasons the Mite program consists of four basic skill levels: Mite 1, Mite 2, Mite 3 and Mite 4. Mite 1 and 2 will practice and play together with evenly split teams under traditional "Mini-Mites". Mite 3 and 4 will practice and play together with evenly split teams under traditional "Mites".

The primary purpose of providing multiple skill levels is to make youth hockey fun for all children by: 1) providing kids an environment where they will not be self-conscious of their current skating capability, 2) not be intimidated and discouraged by participating with peers who are currently more experienced, and 3) provide kids with customized practice plans and noncompetitive games which will serve best to develop their self-confidence, skating skills and make them proud of their accomplishments.

Listed below are general definitions of the four Mite skill levels. When you register, please impartially select the skill level which most closely matches your child's current skating proficiency (not aggressiveness/game play). Regardless of the level chosen by parents during registration, at the beginning of the season all players will be evaluated to determine their proper placement.

The skill levels are flexible, and each year your child's placement will depend on multiple factors such as the player evaluations, the number of players enrolled, team size, the range of talent for that given season and how players can be best grouped to create an evenly balanced program.

MINI-MITES

Mite 1: This program is for players who currently have little or no skating ability (forward steps v. strides). The program is primarily designed for Hockey Age 5 new to skating but will accommodate Hockey Age 6 where necessary.

Mite 2: This program is primarily designed for Hockey Age 5 players who are more proficient and most

Hockey Age 6 players. This level will also accommodate Hockey Age 7 and less proficient Hockey Age 8 players. These kids are able to skate with forward strides on both feet, working on backwards skating, can carry a puck the length of the ice, and can hockey stop on at least one foot (preferably both feet).

MITES

Mite 3: This program is primarily designed for the more proficient Hockey Age 6 players, and the majority of Hockey Age 7 & 8 players. In general, these kids are proficient at striding forward, skate backwards with confidence, will attempt forward crossovers, working on backwards crossovers, efficiently carry a puck while skating/turning, and can hockey stop on both feet.

Mite 4: This program is exclusively designed for the most skilled players at Hockey Age's 7 & 8 and can play up to 10 full ice games after January 15th. This level will consist of the 11-22 players (dependent on the year's total registration) with the highest overall evaluation scores. The number of teams will be determined after the season has begun and we can assess numbers. Actual game play, aggressiveness and a player's propensity to score are not relevant to placement. Players at this level must be capable of active listening, attentively following on ice direction and demonstrate a willingness to attempt and improve on advanced drills. Mite 4 is not a mandatory level for Mite players in their last year of eligibility.

MITE PROGRAM - EVALUATIONS

OVERVIEW

At the start of each hockey season a skill assessment will be conducted to evaluate each child's current hockey/skating ability. Mite 1 and Mite 2 registered skaters will be informally assessed by their coaches during their initial practices to verify the kids are participating at the proper level. Children registered for Mite 3 and Mite 4 will have their skills assessed during their initial practices to determine their placement (which may include repeating to Mite 2 where appropriate).

The kids in the Mite program are very young - between 5 and 9 years old. PLEASE don't get wrapped up in the levels. The levels are utilized solely for proper skill development and your child's enjoyment of being out on the ice. It is very important for all parents to remember:

Similar to sports such as martial arts, gymnastics, and swimming we are merely assessing their current ability so your children can participate, learn and have fun with others of like experience. Just as you wouldn't throw a beginning swimmer in the deep end, we will not incorrectly place a child in a program that will be intimidating and discouraging to their enjoyment of the game.

No one level should be seen as better than another. Regardless of their current skating ability, the Mite program provides a place for all kids to enjoy hockey. The goal is to place our children in both a fun and positive environment which will serve best to develop their confidence, skating skills and make them proud of their accomplishments! Not only will they be placed in the best possible environment in which to learn the great game of hockey, but your children will also gain by developing new friendships in the same way they did when first beginning school.

Improving on their fundamental skills and providing a basis for the players to recognize their accomplishments is essential to their enjoyment of playing the game of hockey and maintaining a lifelong interest. At this young age, placing our children in a noncompetitive environment - with others of like ability - will provide each child the best opportunity to learn basic skills without the pressures that can lead to becoming disenchanted and dropping out.