

Mustang Player Development Handbook



2025/2026

COACH (Who are we as coaches?)

Roles:

- Teacher
- Motivator
- Communicator
- Male role model (single-parent home)
- Disciplinarian

Skills Development:

- Physical skills: Skating, shooting, stick handling, passing
- Mental skills: Ice vision, focus, ability to control emotions, intensity, determination, passion, pride, courage, discipline, positive energy, and understanding the game played at a fast pace.

Coaching Approach:

- Development-oriented coaching should precede winning-oriented coaching. Let's focus on developing first and worry about winning later.

As coaches, we can shape and change the lives of our players. **TW's Example:** Recently, a former player from a single-parent home called to thank me for changing his life. He was struggling in school and in our community, but his time in youth and high school hockey made a positive impact. We teach **hockey skills and life skills**.

Areas of Attack:

- **BO (Break Out): Key strategies for moving the puck out of the defensive zone.**
- **BONZ (Break Out Neutral Zone): Transition strategies in the neutral zone.**
- **LRF (Line Rush For): Importance of width and depth in offensive rushes.**
- **IZO (In Zone Offense): Strategies for offensive play within the opponent's zone.**

In all zones, players "without the puck" should be in an area to support the puck. The only offensive player receiving pressure from the opponent is our player with the puck. Players without the puck must be in a support position, an essential fundamental to teach.

Fundamentals of Defense:

- **Forecheck:** Designed to recover the puck in our offensive zone by taking away the middle of the ice and forcing opponents to the side walls, reducing their pass options by 50%.
- **Forecheck Neutral Zone:** Similar to the forecheck, but in the neutral zone, reducing the opponent's time and space with the puck.

- **Line Rush Against (LRA):** Back pressure is critical. Defensemen must take away ice between the dots, and backchecking forwards must come back between the dots. Give ice on the walls, not the middle.
- **Defensive Zone Coverage:** Start by defending the "house" area, where 90% of goals are scored. Players must understand this area and our shifting options as the opponent passes the puck to create scoring opportunities.

Coaching Youth Players:

- Parents want their kids to win from day one. The change from development to winning varies by level—squirts, pee wee, bantam. Always develop skills and mental understanding while increasing emphasis on winning as players reach pee wee and bantam levels.
- Emphasize nurturing interest, teaching skills, and competitive values to make players better both on and off the ice. Team records should not be the primary focus; skill development and competitive growth should be.

Practice Philosophy:

- Practices should be about "puck touches" to develop skills, game knowledge, and passion for the game. Make it fun to grow interest.
- Bobby Orr emphasizes the importance of physical and mental skills, game understanding, and how the game is played "with and without the puck."

Terminology and Consistency:

- Consistent terminology, drills, zone coverages, forechecks, power plays, penalty kill formations, and face-off formations are essential for effective teaching.
- Simplify and improve practice delivery, working together to provide a consistent message to youth players and parents.

Improving Team Depth and Talent

- Address depth issues at all levels to compete effectively against stronger programs.
- Implement structured practice plans and consistent coaching methods.
- Foster a supportive and competitive environment for player development.

Coaching Tips

- Organize drills that replicate game situations and emphasize competition.
- Use consistent terminology and teaching methods.
- Evaluate the success of practices based on objectives and player performance.

Practice Planning

TRAINING GRITTY WINNERS

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Part, Whole, Part Drill Progression

In order to master a skill you must break it down to its most important parts. The individual parts must be clear and then understood how those parts relate to make the whole.

Step 1: Good communication with your coaching staff

- Clearly define 10-12 good drills that encompass individual skill, tactics, and system play that you are going to emphasize with your team. As a staff come together to discuss, share drills and decide which ones will support your team philosophy.
- With the drills that you chose, make sure that you discuss with your coaches the "offensive" and "defensive side" of the drill as well as the key individual fundamentals that you want to emphasize.
- This helps the staff get clear on the details of the drills which can then be translated with assurance to the players. This will also help when the coaches' personal schedules get busy you already know the drills and the fundamentals.
- The repetition of the drills will help you monitor and enforce the good habits that you want your players to form, the players will gain confidence as well as having the players and staff transition quickly from drill to drill.

Step 2: Clearly define the coach's roles

- Assign one assistant coach to control the drill from a starting and stopping standpoint. An example of this point is making sure goalies are ready to start the next rep.
- Assign one assistant coach to monitor a specific skill or tactic that you want improved or set as a priority (Ex: Ind. Skill-stick on the ice, Tactic-puck enters wide at the blue-line).
- Head Coach should be free to monitor the quality of execution, pace of the drill, provide individual or team feedback, and ultimately stop the drill for any concerns.
- For the growth of the coaches, they should not be assigned one duty for the season. If there has been good discussion and each coach understands the drills, it can be beneficial to the players to hear from different coaches presenting the drills.

Drill Examples

Part: Open Pivot Drill

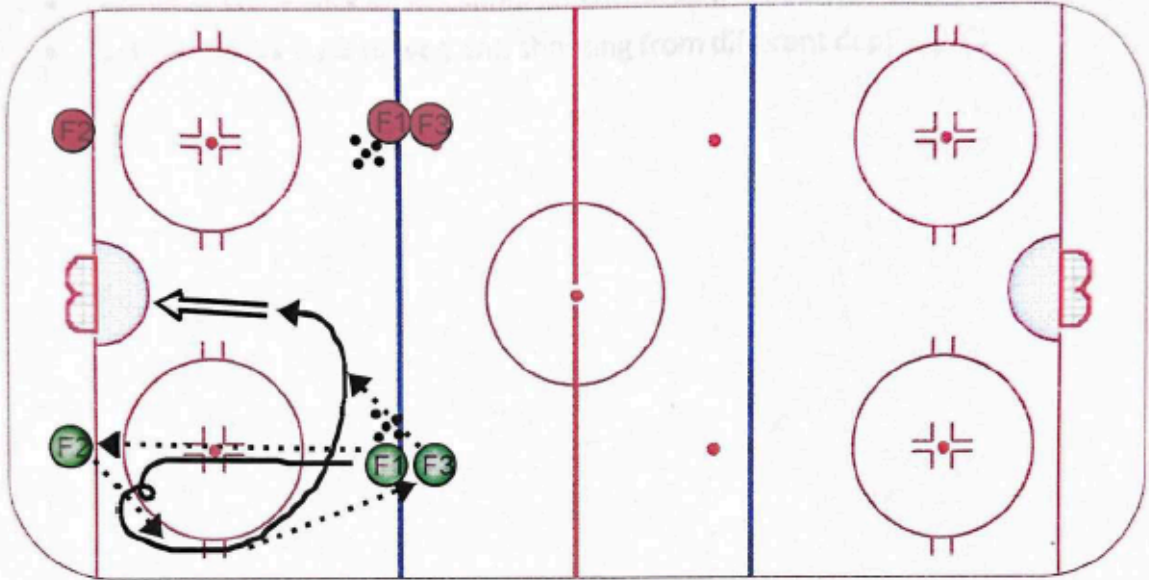
- Individual skill: stick on the ice, shoulder check (AC)
- Tactical: quick puck movement, shooting from different depths (HC)

Drill title: Open Pivot Drill 3/17/2011 7:44 AM Page: 1 of 1

Category #1 : Title : Open Pivot Drill

Category #2 :

Content elements : _____ Components: _____



Key points :

Description

F1 passes to F2 and sprints hard down low in the zone. F1 open pivots facing the puck. F2 makes the pass to F1 on the wall. F1 must get his head up and make a quick pass to F3. F3 passes back to F1 and F1 takes the shot.

As soon as the green player shoots the red group will start or they can be whistle controlled.

Add on:

Green F1 can receive the last pass from green F3 and then quickly pass to red F2 for a give and go and quick shot.

Part: Cleveland Series

- Individual skill: stick on the ice, shoulder check (AC)
- Tactical: Come through the middle with blue-line kick out, shoot for far pad net drive

Drill title: Cleveland Series 3/17/2011 8:12 AM Page: 1 of 1

Category #1 : Title : Cleveland Series

Category #2 : _____

Content elements : _____ Components: _____

Key points :

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Bring the puck through the middle | Kick the puck out at blue-line | Middle lane drive | Shoot far pad |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|

Description

F1 passes to D1 to start the drill. F1 open pivots to the boards. F2 supports the middle. D1 passes to F2 in the middle. F2 sprints the middle and then kicks the puck out at the blue-line. F1 drives wide and shoots far pad. F2 middle lane drives looking for a rebound.

Add on:

Place pucks in the corner. After F1 shoots the player must recover a puck and pass to D1 who followed up the play. D1 takes a point shot with a screen provided by F2

Whole: 3 on 2 Continuous

- Individual skill: stick on the ice, shoulder check (AC)
- Tactical: Come through the middle with blue-line kick out, shoot for far pad net drive (AC)
- System: In zone offense (HC)

Drill title: 3 on 2 Continues 3/17/2011 8:02 AM Page: 1 of 1

Category #1 : Title : 3 on 2 Continues

Category #2 : Components: _____

Content elements : _____

Key points :

Description

Green F's play 3 vs 2 down low against Blue D. Blue forwards are at the tops of the circle waiting for the blue D to transition the puck. After 10 seconds the coach will yell center help and blue F1 can join the d to help transition the puck.

The drill stays continous with another line always joining.

The part-whole-part drill progression in hockey is a teaching method used to develop a player's understanding of a skill or play by breaking it down into manageable pieces. Here's how it works:

1. **Part:** The first step is to isolate and teach a specific skill or part of a drill. For example, if you're focusing on a breakout play, you might begin by teaching players how to make tape-to-tape passes or skate to specific positions on the ice. This allows players to focus on one aspect of the play without feeling overwhelmed.
2. **Whole:** After mastering the individual part, you bring it all together and practice the entire skill or play in its full form. Using the breakout example, players would then run through the entire breakout sequence as it would happen in a game, incorporating passing, skating, and positioning.
3. **Part (Refinement):** After practicing the whole drill, you return to specific parts of it that need improvement. If players struggle with a certain element, like making accurate passes under pressure, you would isolate and practice that part again before reintegrating it into the whole.

This method ensures a balance between skill development and situational understanding, helping players refine their technique and apply it effectively in game scenarios. It's a structured approach that coaches often use to build confidence and competence progressively.

Breakout Drill Progression:

1. **Part:** *Passing Accuracy Drill* Players line up in pairs and practice short, crisp tape-to-tape passes. Focus on technique and communication.
2. **Whole:** *Full Breakout Simulation* Set up a full breakout scenario. Defensemen retrieve the puck behind the net, make outlet passes to the forwards, and transition up the ice as a unit.
3. **Part (Refinement):** *Pressure Passing Drill* Add a defender to pressure the defensemen during the breakout. This isolates and improves decision-making and passing under pressure.

Shooting Drill Progression:

1. **Part:** *Wrist Shot Accuracy Drill* Players practice wrist shots from stationary positions, focusing on technique and aiming for targets in the corners of the net.
2. **Whole:** *Scoring Off the Rush* Players skate in on a rush (1-on-0 or 2-on-1 scenarios) and take a shot on goal, incorporating speed and positioning.
3. **Part (Refinement):** *Quick Release Drill* Focus specifically on quick shot releases. Players receive a pass in the slot and must shoot as quickly as possible.

Defensive Zone Coverage Progression:

1. **Part:** *One-on-One Positioning Drill* Players work on maintaining proper positioning against an attacking forward in a one-on-one scenario.

2. **Whole:** *Defensive Zone Coverage Drill* Set up a 5-on-5 situation in the defensive zone and have players practice maintaining coverage as a unit.
3. **Part (Refinement):** *Net Front Battles Drill* Isolate battles in front of the net to strengthen players' abilities to clear opponents or maintain positioning.

These drills allow players to build individual skills, integrate them into a game context, and refine areas that need improvement. Let me know if you'd like help tailoring these drills to specific player levels or positions!

Mustang Development Model Summary

6U (Colts)

- **Skill Development:** 90%
- **System Play:** 10%

At this age, the focus should primarily be on building basic skills. The idea is to make the players feel comfortable on the ice, understand the mechanics of skating, puck handling, and basic concepts of playing with others.

- **Skill Focus:**
 - Basic skating (forward/backward, stopping, turning)
 - Basic puck handling (stick grip, moving the puck)
 - Passing and receiving
 - Simple shooting techniques (just the fundamentals)
 - **System Focus:**
 - Very basic concepts of team play: skating with the puck, being aware of where teammates are
 - Simple drills like moving to open space or following the puck, but nothing complex yet.
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8U (Ponies/Mustangs)

- **Skill Development:** 80%
- **System Play:** 20%

At this age, players still need a strong focus on developing basic skills, but we can begin to introduce simple team concepts, such as moving the puck and understanding where to be on the ice.

- **Skill Focus:**
 - Continued skating improvement (crossovers, pivots)
 - Stickhandling under pressure (keeping the puck close)
 - Passing and shooting accuracy
 - Basic puck protection
- **System Focus:**
 - Basic team concepts: passing to teammates, moving to open space
 - Introduction to simple offensive and defensive positioning
 - 1v1 and 2v2 drills to start teaching small-area hockey concepts

10U (Squirt Level)

- **Skill Development:** 70%
- **System Play:** 30%

As players progress, the emphasis shifts slightly toward more team concepts. However, skills still dominate, and players should continue to develop their skating, puck handling, and shooting abilities. System play starts to be introduced with more attention to offensive and defensive roles.

- **Skill Focus:**
 - Advanced skating (edge control, accelerating, stopping quickly)
 - Increased stickhandling skills (dekes, quick turns)
 - Precision passing and shooting (forehand/backhand)
 - Basic concepts of puck retrieval and breakout
- **System Focus:**
 - Introduction to offensive and defensive zone positioning
 - Basic understanding of forechecking and backchecking
 - 2v2 and 3v3 drills to introduce spacing and puck support
 - Creating and exploiting passing lanes, simple breakout drills

12U (Peewee Level)

- **Skill Development:** 60%
- **System Play:** 40%

At 12U, players begin to develop more refined individual skills, while team play becomes more structured. Players should start to understand the concepts of positioning, offensive and defensive strategies, and how to work as a unit.

- **Skill Focus:**
 - Power skating (focus on agility, edge work, and acceleration)
 - Stickhandling at high speeds and under pressure
 - Advanced passing and shooting (quick release, accuracy)
 - Defensive skills (gap control, blocking shots, body positioning)
- **System Focus:**
 - Offensive and defensive systems (creating a cycle in the offensive zone, defensive zone coverage)
 - Power play and penalty kill basics (positioning, puck movement)
 - Developing breakouts and zone entries
 - More advanced forechecking and backchecking principles

14U (Bantam Level)

- **Skill Development:** 50%
- **System Play:** 50%

At this level, players need to have strong individual skills but are also expected to execute more complex systems of play. This is where hockey IQ and decision-making really start to come into play, and systems become more important.

- **Skill Focus:**
 - Explosive skating (acceleration, quick turns, high-speed skating)
 - Advanced puck protection and puck retrieval
 - Deft stickhandling, including using fakes to beat opponents
 - Accurate shooting under pressure (wrist shots, slapshots, backhands)
- **System Focus:**
 - Advanced offensive systems (neutral zone entries, breakouts, offensive zone cycling)
 - Defensive systems (man-to-man coverage, zone defense)
 - Special teams (power play, penalty kill, faceoffs)
 - Situational awareness (understanding when to forecheck, when to backcheck, when to trap)

Summary of Progression

| Age Group | Skill Development | System Play |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------|
| 6U | 90% | 10% |
| 8U | 80% | 20% |
| 10U | 70% | 30% |
| 12U | 60% | 40% |
| 14U | 50% | 50% |

Key Principles Across All Levels:

- **6U-8U:** Focus is overwhelmingly on individual skills. The game is more about fun and learning how to move on the ice, with a small amount of basic team play introduced.
- **10U-12U:** Skill development is still the priority, but system play becomes more relevant. Players begin to understand how to work together, and systems start to play a role in guiding their play.
- **14U:** There is a clear balance between refining individual skills and mastering team concepts. Systems (offensive/defensive) and special teams become much more critical, and players need to execute them with precision.

By gradually introducing systems as the players' individual skills improve, the model ensures that players have the tools to understand and apply team concepts, ultimately becoming well-rounded hockey players capable of contributing to both individual and team success.

Learn to Skate

Teaching **Learn to Skate** hockey players (usually beginners, often ages 4-7) requires a gradual, fun approach that focuses on building fundamental skating skills before diving into hockey-specific skills. The goal is to help them become comfortable on the ice, develop balance, and gain confidence. Here's a structured approach to teaching them throughout the year:

Season Breakdown by Focus Areas:

First Few Weeks: Basic Skating Fundamentals

At the start of the season, your primary focus is building **comfort and confidence on the ice**.

1. **Getting Comfortable on Ice:**
 - **Falling and Getting Up:** Teach how to fall safely and how to get back up without panicking.
 - **Gliding:** Introduce gliding with both feet. Have them practice standing still and then gliding forward, focusing on balance.
 - **Marching:** Encourage them to march in place to build leg strength, which will help them later when learning to skate.
2. **Balance and Posture:**
 - **Knees Bent:** Show them how to bend their knees slightly for better balance and a lower center of gravity.
 - **Head Up:** Remind them to look ahead, not down at their feet, to help maintain balance.
3. **Edge Control:**
 - **Inside Edges:** Teach them how to press the inside edges of their skates to glide.
 - **Outside Edges:** Help them practice pressing the outside edges to improve control while turning and stopping.
4. **Basic Stops:**
 - **Snowplow Stop:** Introduce the snowplow stop, where they angle the inside edges of their skates outward to slow down and stop.

Next Few Weeks: Building Skating Confidence and Control

As players begin to get comfortable gliding, it's time to work on more **controlled movements** and **better balance**.

1. **Striding:**
 - **Basic Strides:** Encourage long, powerful strides with both feet. Focus on pushing off with one leg and gliding on the other.
 - **Glide and Stride:** Have them practice a stride-glide pattern where they push, glide, and then repeat.

2. **Turning:**
 - **Two-Foot Turns:** Teach how to make turns by shifting weight and pushing the skates to the side.
 - **One-Foot Turns:** For more advanced skaters, practice turns on one skate while gliding to improve edge control and turning ability.
3. **Balance and Stability:**
 - **Tight Circles:** Create small circles to help them feel their edges and improve control.
 - **Balancing on One Foot:** Have them practice balancing on one foot while stationary and gliding.
4. **Introduction to Stops:**
 - **T-Stop:** Introduce the T-stop where one skate forms a “T” with the other, helping them stop without falling.

Middle of the Season: Hockey-Specific Skating Skills

By now, players should have a basic understanding of skating, so you can introduce **skills that apply directly to hockey**.

1. **Skating Speed and Agility:**
 - **Forward Skating:** Practice skating forward with more speed and control.
 - **Backwards Skating:** Begin introducing the concept of skating backward by focusing on small glides, then progress to full backward skating.
 - **Crossover Drills:** Introduce the basic crossover to help them turn more efficiently while skating.
2. **Stopping:**
 - **Snowplow Stop Refinement:** Refine their snowplow stops, helping them stop more quickly and with more control.
 - **Hockey Stop:** Start teaching the hockey stop by turning the skates sideways in a controlled manner to come to a complete stop.
3. **Small Hockey Skills:**
 - **Stickhandling:** Introduce a stick and a puck, showing them how to control the puck while skating.
 - **Puck Awareness:** Teach them how to handle the puck in a controlled manner while gliding forward.

Late in the Season: Hockey Fundamentals and Refining Skills

By this point in the season, the players should be comfortable on the ice, and you can shift towards more **hockey-specific movements**.

1. **Crossovers:**
 - **Inside Crossovers:** Help players practice crossing over inside edges to change direction while skating forward.

- **Outside Crossovers:** Teach outside crossovers for sharper turns and better skating efficiency.
- 2. **Advanced Stopping Techniques:**
 - **One-Foot Stops:** Teach them to stop on one foot while gliding forward or backward.
 - **Hockey Stops Under Pressure:** Refine the hockey stop, incorporating it into game-like situations.
- 3. **Puck Handling While Skating:**
 - **Stickhandling While Gliding:** Teach how to handle the puck while skating with their head up and body balanced.
 - **Puck Control and Passing:** Have them practice passing the puck to teammates while skating, starting with stationary passing and moving to more dynamic, skating-and-passing drills.
- 4. **Introduction to Game Play:**
 - **Basic Game Concepts:** Introduce them to basic game scenarios, like where to go when they have the puck, how to get to the net, and basic positioning without getting too technical.
 - **Mini-Scrimmages:** Play small-sided games that allow them to practice skating and puck handling in a relaxed, fun environment.

Throughout the Year: Fun and Engaging Drills

Throughout the entire year, keep practices **fun** and **engaging** with creative games and drills that incorporate the skills they're learning. Examples:

- **Obstacle Courses:** Set up courses with cones and other props to work on skating agility, speed, and edge control.
- **Relay Races:** Incorporate fun races that focus on balance, speed, and stopping.
- **Sharks and Minnows:** A tag game where players work on evading the "sharks" by skating quickly and changing direction.

Key Focus Areas Throughout the Year:

- **Safety First:** Always make sure they are wearing appropriate protective gear (helmet, gloves, pads).
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Praise effort, improvement, and teamwork to help foster a love for the sport.
- **Building Confidence:** Keep it fun, so kids feel comfortable and excited about their progress.

By the end of the season, players should be much more comfortable on the ice, able to skate forwards and backwards, make simple turns, stop safely, and possibly have a basic understanding of handling a puck while skating. Always keep in mind that **patience, consistency, and fun** are key in teaching this age group!

6U Colts

Teaching **6U hockey players** (ages 5-6) focuses primarily on developing basic skating skills, building confidence on the ice, and introducing the foundational elements of hockey. The goal at this age is to make learning fun while gradually helping them gain skills they'll use as they progress in the sport. Here's a breakdown of what to teach throughout the season:

Early Season Focus: Getting Comfortable on the Ice & Building Basic Skills

1. Skating Basics At this stage, many 6U players are just beginning to get comfortable on skates. Focus on building their confidence and basic skating skills.

- **Balance:** Help them practice standing still and gliding on both feet. They should feel comfortable and stable on the ice.
- **Gliding:** Teach them how to glide on both feet (with their knees slightly bent) and progress to small glides.
- **Marching:** Have them practice marching in place to develop leg strength and get used to moving forward on the ice.
- **Falling and Getting Up:** Teach them how to fall safely (on their side or bum) and get back up by using their hands to push themselves upright.
- **Snowplow Stop:** Introduce the snowplow stop, where they angle their skates outwards to create friction and slow down.

2. Forward Skating

- **Basic Strides:** Teach them to push off one foot and glide on the other. The goal is for them to begin learning how to make basic strides.
- **Glide and Step:** Practice the glide-and-step motion, where one foot strides while the other glides to help them move forward more efficiently.

3. Basic Stance

- **Knees Bent:** Teach them to keep their knees bent while skating to maintain balance.
 - **Head Up:** Encourage players to look ahead rather than down at their skates, which improves balance and awareness.
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Mid-Season Focus: Building Confidence & Introducing Hockey Skills

As players gain confidence and better control on the ice, you can start focusing on **introducing hockey-specific skills** like stick handling, basic passing, and shooting.

1. Stickhandling and Puck Control

- **Puck Awareness:** Teach them to feel the puck on their stick, even if they aren't fully controlling it yet. Practice tapping the puck forward and back and guiding it in a straight line.
- **Soft Hands:** Emphasize using light hands to keep the puck close to the stick and help with control.
- **Dribbling:** Have them practice moving the puck forward in small, controlled pushes.
- **Basic Puck Control:** Introduce simple drills where they dribble the puck around cones or obstacles while skating to practice controlling the puck at slow speeds.

2. Passing

- **Stationary Passing:** Start with stationary passing where they pass the puck to a partner. Focus on making accurate passes using the blade of the stick.
- **Receiving Passes:** Teach them how to receive passes by keeping their stick on the ice and gently absorbing the puck to control it.
- **Passing on the Move:** As they become more comfortable, introduce passing while moving. This can be done in simple line drills where they pass back and forth while skating.

3. Basic Shooting

- **Wrist Shots:** Start introducing the concept of a wrist shot by focusing on the proper grip and shooting technique. Emphasize aiming for the corners of the net rather than trying to shoot with power.
- **Accuracy:** Work on shooting accuracy over power. Set up targets in the net (e.g., small cones or spots) to help them aim.

4. Basic Defensive Skills

- **Stick Positioning:** Teach them to hold their stick low on the ice to block passes and poke-check (without slashing). You can do simple drills where they practice getting in front of the puck.
 - **Body Positioning:** Introduce the concept of staying between the puck and the net. Encourage them to stay in good defensive positioning, even if they don't fully understand the concept yet.
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Late Season Focus: Refining Skills, Game Situations, and Team Play

As the season progresses, players should have a better grasp of the basic skating and hockey skills, and now is the time to work on **refining those skills** and introducing them to **basic game concepts**.

1. More Advanced Skating Skills

- **Crossovers:** Start introducing the basic **crossovers** for turning, particularly when skating around cones. Emphasize the importance of using the edges of their skates to turn efficiently.
- **Backward Skating:** As they gain confidence, begin teaching backward skating. Start with small glides backward and then progress to longer strides.
- **Quick Starts:** Teach them how to start skating quickly from a standstill, which is important for speed in games.

2. Hockey Sense and Team Play

- **Moving to Open Space:** Teach them to move to open areas on the ice when they don't have the puck, to make themselves available for passes.
- **Basic Game Awareness:** Introduce the idea of positioning in a simple way (e.g., getting in front of the net or staying near the puck). You can have them practice moving into different spots depending on where the puck is.
- **Teamwork:** Emphasize **passing** to teammates rather than always trying to keep the puck. Encourage them to look for opportunities to pass and support each other on the ice.
- **Small-Sided Games:** Play 2v2 or 3v3 games during practice. These games provide lots of touches on the puck and help them learn how to play in a game setting with a focus on teamwork and simple strategies.

3. Basic Game Situations

- **Face-offs:** Introduce face-off basics—how to line up, grip the stick, and push for the puck.
 - **Understanding Offside and Icing:** At this age, you can briefly introduce the concepts of offside (not crossing the blue line before the puck) and icing (shooting the puck from behind the center red line without anyone touching it).
 - **Shifting and Resting:** Teach them the concept of short shifts—skating for a short period of time, then resting while teammates go on the ice. This helps players understand the importance of conserving energy and keeping fresh legs.
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Throughout the Season: Fun Drills and Games

Keep the atmosphere fun and engaging by including games and activities that integrate skills but are light-hearted and competitive:

- **Obstacle Courses:** Set up courses with cones to improve agility, speed, and control while skating.
 - **Relay Races:** Create races where they can practice various skills, like skating or stickhandling, in a competitive, but fun, environment.
 - **Sharks and Minnows:** Play tag on the ice, where “sharks” try to tag the “minnows.” This helps with skating speed and agility.
 - **Puck Control Challenges:** Set up small challenges where players have to navigate through cones while handling the puck.
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Sample Weekly Practice Structure:

1. **Warm-Up (5-10 minutes):**
 - Fun skating drills to get them moving and comfortable on the ice.
 2. **Skill Development (15-20 minutes):**
 - Focus on a specific skill like skating, passing, or shooting.
 3. **Game Situations (10-15 minutes):**
 - Simple drills or mini-games that simulate game scenarios.
 4. **Scrimmage/Small-Sided Games (10-15 minutes):**
 - Play small games like 2v2 or 3v3 to encourage team play and decision-making.
 5. **Cool Down (5 minutes):**
 - Light skating or stretching, ending with positive feedback and encouragement.
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Key Tips for 6U Coaches:

- **Patience:** Be patient and supportive as 6U players are still developing basic skills.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Celebrate small successes and effort, rather than focusing on mistakes.
- **Fun First:** Keep the atmosphere light and fun, as this age group is just beginning to form their love for the sport.
- **Encourage Teamwork:** Teach them how to play as a team and share the puck.

By the end of the season, 6U players should be more confident in their skating, handling the puck, and working with teammates, laying a strong foundation for future development in the game!

8U Ponies and Mustangs

Teaching **8U hockey players** (ages 7-8) is all about building on basic skills, developing hockey sense, and encouraging teamwork. At this age, players are ready to move beyond the very basics of skating and puck handling, and they start learning more advanced skills while still keeping things fun and engaging. Here's a breakdown of what to focus on throughout the season:

Early Season Focus: Fundamental Skills & Confidence Building

1. Skating Fundamentals At this point, most 8U players will have a basic understanding of skating. You can now refine their skating technique and introduce more dynamic movements:

- **Strides and Power Skating:** Work on longer, stronger strides and proper technique to improve skating speed and efficiency.
- **Backward Skating:** Continue reinforcing backward skating with an emphasis on balance and control.
- **Stopping:** Refine the **snowplow stop** and **hockey stop**, focusing on quick and controlled stops.
- **Edges and Crossovers:** Introduce or refine **inside** and **outside edges**, as well as the crossover technique for smoother turns.

2. Puck Control

- **Stickhandling:** Work on maintaining control of the puck while skating. Introduce basic puck handling moves (such as the toe drag or stick tap) to keep the puck close while skating at higher speeds.
- **Puck Awareness:** Teach players to keep their heads up while handling the puck, allowing them to make quick decisions.
- **Passing and Receiving:** Practice **short passes** and **receiving the puck** properly. Work on passing to teammates while skating and receiving passes with soft hands.

3. Basic Positioning

- **Offensive Positioning:** Teach them to move to open spaces and encourage them to keep their sticks on the ice to receive passes.
 - **Defensive Positioning:** Introduce the basic concept of **covering opponents**, staying between the puck and the net, and **keeping a good defensive stance**.
 - **Transitioning:** Work on transitioning from offense to defense quickly and maintaining a good position on the ice during transitions.
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Mid-Season Focus: Hockey-Specific Skills & Game Situations

1. Shooting and Scoring At this stage, 8U players should begin working on their shooting technique:

- **Wrist Shots:** Teach players how to shoot with a wrist shot, focusing on accuracy over power. Emphasize following through and aiming for the corners of the net.
- **Snap Shots:** Introduce snap shots as a faster, more accurate shot.
- **One-Timers:** Practice one-timers to help players quickly release shots when receiving a pass in the offensive zone.

2. Advanced Skating Skills

- **Crossovers:** Continue to work on **inside** and **outside crossovers** to help players gain speed and maneuver more effectively.
- **Edge Work:** Refine edge control to help with quicker direction changes. Focus on making tight turns and skating efficiently around cones or opponents.
- **Speed and Agility:** Implement agility drills (e.g., weaving between cones) to help players with quick changes in direction and speed.

3. Passing and Receiving (Advanced)

- **Passes Under Pressure:** Have players practice passing while under light pressure from a defender, focusing on accuracy and timing.
- **Receiving Passes:** Continue reinforcing the importance of soft hands while receiving passes and being ready to move the puck quickly.
- **Passing in Motion:** Teach passing while skating, rather than stopping to make a pass. This builds fluid movement and better team play.

4. Defensive Skills

- **Puck Battles:** Work on winning **puck battles** along the boards by focusing on using the body to shield the puck and maintain possession.
- **Stick Checking:** Teach proper stick checking techniques to poke the puck away from an opponent without slashing.
- **Positioning in the Defensive Zone:** Emphasize staying between the puck and the net, as well as **keeping the gap** between the defender and the attacking player.

Late Season Focus: Team Play, Hockey IQ & Refinement

1. Hockey Sense and Situational Awareness

- **Game Situations:** Start introducing more game-related scenarios, like **power plays**, **penalty kills**, and **line changes**.

- **Decision Making:** Work on decision-making, such as whether to pass, shoot, or carry the puck based on the situation on the ice. Teach them how to recognize when a pass or shot is the best option.
- **Small Games:** Play small-sided games (3v3 or 4v4) to help them understand spacing, puck movement, and teamwork. These types of games will encourage players to think faster and apply their skills in game situations.

2. Team Play

- **Passing and Moving:** Reinforce the importance of **moving without the puck** and supporting teammates. Teach players to communicate and work as a team to move the puck up the ice.
- **Basic Forechecking:** Introduce the concept of **forechecking**, where players pressure the puck carrier in the opponent's zone to regain possession.
- **Backchecking:** Teach the importance of **backchecking**, or getting back to help defend when possession is lost.

3. Special Teams and Situational Play

- **Power Play:** Teach the basic concept of the **power play** (having a numerical advantage). Focus on moving the puck quickly and shooting when possible.
- **Penalty Kill:** Introduce the concept of the **penalty kill** (defending when short-handed), focusing on positioning and blocking shots.
- **Faceoffs:** Introduce faceoff techniques and the importance of winning faceoffs to gain possession of the puck.

Throughout the Season: Fun and Engagement

At the 8U level, making sure players have fun while learning is crucial. Keep these elements in mind:

- **Games and Competitions:** Use fun drills that incorporate competitive elements, like races, obstacle courses, or "puck control relays."
 - **Teamwork:** Encourage positive team dynamics, cooperation, and communication on and off the ice.
 - **Sportsmanship:** Reinforce good sportsmanship, respect for opponents, and playing the game with integrity.
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Key Tips for 8U Coaches:

- **Encourage Creativity:** Allow players to experiment with moves and skills during practice, as it helps them develop their creativity and confidence.
- **Keep it Fun:** Keep the atmosphere light and enjoyable, as this age group is still learning to love the game.
- **Be Patient:** Progress at their pace, understanding that skill development at this age can vary widely from player to player.

By the end of the season, your 8U players should be more confident in their skating, puck control, and teamwork, and will have a solid foundation to build upon for the future!

10U Squirts

Teaching **10U hockey players** (ages 9-10) focuses on refining their skills, developing a better understanding of the game, and introducing more advanced hockey concepts. By this age, players are typically more comfortable on the ice, and they can start applying their individual skills in a team-oriented environment. Here's a breakdown of what to teach throughout the season:

Early Season Focus: Skill Refinement & Game Understanding

1. Skating and Speed At this point, most players should have good basic skating skills, so now is the time to refine and develop speed, agility, and power skating.

- **Edge Work:** Continue to improve their edge control with more complex drills (e.g., tight turns, crossover transitions). Focus on inside and outside edges to help them with quick changes in direction.
- **Strides and Power Skating:** Teach players to develop long, powerful strides. Emphasize speed and skating technique to improve acceleration and speed.
- **Backward Skating:** Continue to refine backward skating with emphasis on balance, smooth transitions, and quick backward strides. Work on backward crossovers for better turning and agility.
- **Stopping:** Refine the **hockey stop** (sliding to a stop on both feet) with speed, and introduce the concept of stopping and starting quickly.

2. Stickhandling and Puck Control

- **Advanced Stickhandling:** Teach more advanced stickhandling techniques, such as the **toe drag** (dragging the puck around defenders) or **crossover stickhandling** (changing directions while handling the puck).
- **Puck Protection:** Work on protecting the puck using their body and stick (keeping it away from defenders), particularly in tight spaces and during board battles.
- **One-Handed Stickhandling:** Start teaching them to stickhandle using one hand to increase puck control while moving fast.

3. Passing and Receiving

- **Passing with Pressure:** Practice passing under light pressure, focusing on accuracy and timing. Teach them to pass to where their teammate will be, rather than where they currently are.
- **Receiving Passes:** Emphasize the importance of receiving passes with soft hands (absorbing the puck), and work on receiving passes while in motion.

- **Passing in Stride:** Focus on passing while skating, ensuring the puck is delivered to the teammate while they are still moving forward.
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Mid-Season Focus: Game Situations & Advanced Hockey Skills

1. Shooting and Scoring By now, players should be more comfortable with basic shots, so it's time to refine and expand their shooting skills.

- **Wrist Shots:** Continue refining the wrist shot for accuracy and speed. Emphasize proper technique, including stick flex and follow-through.
- **Snap Shots:** Teach the snap shot as a quicker release shot, focusing on using less windup to get shots off faster.
- **Backhand Shots:** Introduce backhand shots, focusing on proper technique and accuracy. Teach them how to change angles and shoot from various positions.
- **One-Timers:** Start practicing one-timer shots (quick shots off a pass), emphasizing timing and shot accuracy.
- **Shooting Under Pressure:** Have them practice shooting in game-like situations, under pressure from defenders, and from different angles.

2. Puck Handling Under Pressure

- **Dealing with Defenders:** Practice handling the puck with pressure from a defender (stick-checking, body positioning). Use drills that simulate game situations with defensive pressure.
- **Quick Stick Moves:** Teach how to use quick stick moves (like toe drags or dekes) to evade defenders while maintaining puck control.
- **Protecting the Puck in Small Areas:** Practice small-area puck battles, focusing on winning battles along the boards and in corners.

3. Defensive Skills

- **Stick Checking and Poke Checking:** Teach proper stick checking techniques to poke the puck away from opponents without slashing.
- **Gap Control:** Focus on maintaining the correct gap when defending an opponent, staying between them and the net, and not over-committing.
- **Positioning:** Emphasize the importance of keeping good positioning when defending, such as positioning yourself between the puck carrier and the net, and staying aware of other players on the ice.

4. Transitioning

- **Transition from Defense to Offense:** Teach how to quickly transition from a defensive position to an offensive one (e.g., turning defense into a breakout). Work on quick puck movement and decision-making.

- **Breakouts:** Practice breakout passes, including from behind the net and from the corners, and teach them to move quickly and effectively when transitioning from defense to offense.
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Late Season Focus: Team Play, Systems, and Game IQ

1. Hockey Sense and Game Situations At this stage, it's essential to develop a **hockey IQ** by teaching players how to read the game and think ahead.

- **Offensive Zone Play:** Teach offensive zone strategies, such as how to create space, cycling the puck, and moving to open areas for passes.
- **Defensive Zone Coverage:** Work on defensive zone positioning, including blocking shooting lanes, supporting the puck carrier, and getting into proper positions for forechecking and backchecking.
- **Understanding Game Situations:** Teach players how to read game situations and make decisions based on the flow of the game (e.g., when to be aggressive, when to back off, managing time on the clock).
- **Understanding Special Teams:** Introduce basic concepts of power plays and penalty kills, focusing on positioning and teamwork during these situations.

2. Faceoffs

- **Faceoff Techniques:** Teach basic faceoff mechanics (proper stance, grip, timing) and how to win faceoffs in different situations (offensive vs. defensive zone).
- **Faceoff Strategy:** Focus on winning faceoffs with a teammate's help, whether it's by controlling the puck or quick tie-ups to gain possession.

3. Team Play and Communication

- **Puck Movement:** Emphasize quick puck movement, both offensively and defensively, ensuring the team stays in sync with each other.
- **Passing and Moving Without the Puck:** Reinforce the importance of supporting the puck carrier by moving to open areas and being ready for passes.
- **Team Defense:** Teach the importance of backchecking and supporting teammates in the defensive zone. This includes helping clear pucks from in front of the net and maintaining defensive positioning.

4. Advanced Breakouts and Zone Entry

- **Breakouts:** Focus on creating fast and effective breakouts. Teach quick passes from defensemen to forwards, and forwards helping out by moving into open space.
- **Zone Entry:** Practice how to enter the offensive zone with control, including how to carry the puck in while using quick passes, and how to enter by dumping and chasing if necessary.

Throughout the Season: Fun and Engaging Drills

Make sure to keep practices fun and engaging by incorporating competitive games and drills that help reinforce the skills being learned:

- **Small-Sided Games:** Use 3v3 or 4v4 games to help players develop their skills in game-like situations with more touches on the puck.
- **Puck Control Races:** Set up races where players must stickhandle through cones or around obstacles, enhancing both speed and control.
- **Passing Drills:** Use passing drills with movement, such as passing while skating or passing on the move to simulate real game scenarios.
- **Conditioning Games:** Use games like **Sharks and Minnows** or **Capture the Puck** to work on conditioning while keeping things fun.

Sample Weekly Practice Structure:

1. **Warm-Up (5-10 minutes):**
 - Light skating or a fun, low-pressure game to get the players moving.
2. **Skill Development (15-20 minutes):**
 - Focus on a specific skill like shooting, stickhandling, or skating.
3. **Game Situation Drills (10-15 minutes):**
 - Practice drills that simulate game situations, such as breakouts, forechecking, or positioning.
4. **Small-Sided Scrimmage (15-20 minutes):**
 - Play 3v3 or 4v4 games to practice skills in a more competitive, game-like environment.
5. **Cool Down (5 minutes):**
 - Light skating or stretching, and end with positive reinforcement.

Key Tips for 10U Coaches:

- **Reinforce Hockey IQ:** Encourage players to think ahead and make decisions based on what's happening on the ice.
- **Challenge Them:** Provide challenges that push players to improve, but don't overwhelm them. Focus on continuous improvement.
- **Teamwork:** Foster a sense of teamwork and communication, ensuring players understand that hockey is about collective effort.
- **Positive Feedback:** Keep practices positive and motivating, and emphasize effort and improvement over mistakes.

By the end of the season, 10U players should have refined their skating, shooting, and puck-handling skills, and they should have a much better understanding of game situations, positioning, and teamwork. This sets them up for more advanced learning and development as they move toward the next stage of their hockey journey!

12U Peewees

Teaching **12U hockey players** (ages 11-12) focuses on **fine-tuning individual skills**, developing **advanced tactical understanding**, and introducing more complex team play concepts. At this age, players should have a strong foundation in basic hockey skills, so you can now refine their techniques and increase the speed and intensity of their play. Here's a breakdown of what to teach throughout the season:

Early Season Focus: Skill Refinement & Tactical Development

1. Skating & Speed By this age, players should be strong skaters, but it's important to continue refining their skating technique and developing more power.

- **Advanced Edge Work:** Focus on improving edge control with **tight turns, crossover transitions**, and **sharp stops**. These skills are key to improving agility and defensive play.
- **Backward Skating:** Continue refining backward skating with quick and fluid crossovers, focusing on balance and speed. This is important for both offense and defense.
- **Power Skating:** Work on long, powerful strides for better acceleration and speed. Focus on using the entire blade to generate more push and speed.
- **Speed and Agility Drills:** Incorporate drills that improve quickness, lateral movement, and overall agility.

2. Stickhandling & Puck Control By this age, players should have a good handle on basic puck control, so now is the time to work on **advanced puck-handling skills**.

- **Deft Stickhandling:** Work on using both hands to manipulate the puck effectively in tight spaces. Use **toe drags** and **dangles** to help players develop better control and deception.
- **Stickhandling with Speed:** Emphasize stickhandling while skating at speed. Create drills that force players to control the puck while moving quickly and evading defenders.
- **Quick Hands:** Practice quick stick moves that allow players to protect the puck under pressure, such as quick **puck pulls** and **fake passes** to deceive defenders.

3. Passing & Receiving At 12U, passing accuracy and timing become even more crucial as players start making quicker decisions in tighter spaces.

- **Passing with Pressure:** Work on passing under pressure from defenders. Teach players to **read the play** and recognize when to pass quickly and when to hold onto the puck longer.

- **One-Touch Passing:** Emphasize quick, accurate one-touch passes to develop faster offensive play. This is crucial for improving **passing efficiency** and **keeping the puck moving**.
 - **Passing in Motion:** Focus on passing while skating, especially leading teammates to the puck as they skate into open space.
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Mid-Season Focus: Advanced Offensive and Defensive Skills

1. Shooting & Scoring At this stage, players should be able to shoot with power and accuracy. Now, the focus is on **advanced shooting techniques** and **shooting under pressure**.

- **Wrist and Snap Shots:** Continue refining wrist and snap shots for accuracy and quick release. Focus on shooting in stride and making sure the puck stays on the ice for better chances at scoring.
- **Slap Shots:** Introduce or refine slap shots, focusing on technique and timing. Emphasize using proper stick flex and getting the shot off quickly.
- **Backhand Shots:** Work on backhand shooting from different angles. The backhand can be challenging for goalies to read, so getting comfortable with this shot is important.
- **Screen Shots:** Teach players how to shoot through traffic, focusing on using the body or defenders to screen the goalie. Emphasize quick releases and accurate shooting.
- **Rebound Control:** Work on shooting for rebounds. Teach players to aim for low shots so teammates can crash the net for second-chance opportunities.

2. Puck Protection & Physical Play At 12U, players should start developing a more **physical style** of play, particularly when it comes to protecting the puck and engaging in battles along the boards.

- **Puck Protection:** Teach players how to use their body to shield the puck from defenders, especially in tight spaces and along the boards.
- **Battle Drills:** Create drills that simulate puck battles along the boards or in the corners. Emphasize maintaining possession of the puck and fighting through pressure.
- **Using the Body:** Introduce checking techniques (body contact, not body checking). Emphasize using body positioning to separate opponents from the puck while keeping the play legal and safe.

3. Defensive Play At 12U, it's important to focus on **defensive awareness** and **transitioning from defense to offense**.

- **Gap Control:** Teach players how to maintain an appropriate gap between themselves and the puck carrier. This is essential for preventing opponents from entering the zone with speed.
- **Stick Positioning:** Work on proper stick positioning for blocking shots and poke-checking, as well as intercepting passes.

- **Defensive Zone Coverage:** Emphasize **man-on-man defense** and **zone defense**, ensuring that players know how to cover their man while maintaining good positioning in the defensive zone.
 - **Defensive Transitions:** Teach quick transitions from defense to offense, focusing on moving the puck out of the zone efficiently. Work on breakout passes and support for the puck carrier.
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Late Season Focus: Team Play, Systems, and Strategy

1. Power Play & Special Teams At this age, players should begin to understand **special team play**—how to play both on the **power play** and **penalty kill**.

- **Power Play Structure:** Introduce basic power play systems (e.g., **umbrella** or **overload**), focusing on puck movement, positioning, and creating shooting lanes. Emphasize quick passes and positioning to take advantage of the extra player.
- **Penalty Kill Structure:** Teach the fundamentals of the penalty kill, focusing on blocking shooting lanes, staying in the correct defensive positions, and clearing the puck.
- **Faceoff Strategy:** Continue to work on faceoff techniques, including positioning, timing, and winning key faceoffs. Teach players how to win faceoffs in both the defensive and offensive zones.

2. Game Situations & Hockey IQ Develop the players' **hockey IQ** by introducing **more complex game situations** and decision-making.

- **Situational Awareness:** Teach players to **read the game**. For example, when to be aggressive in attacking the net, when to pull back in the defensive zone, and how to manage the clock in close games.
- **Small-Area Games:** Use small-area games (e.g., 3v3, 4v4) to focus on improving positioning, puck movement, and decision-making in tight spaces.
- **Breakout Strategies:** Work on breakout strategies under pressure. Players should learn how to execute a controlled breakout in tight spaces, even when being forechecked heavily.
- **Zone Entries:** Teach players how to effectively enter the offensive zone, either with puck control or by dumping and chasing. Discuss the importance of timing and positioning when entering the zone.

3. Leadership and Teamwork At 12U, fostering good leadership and teamwork becomes even more important. Encourage players to support each other, communicate on the ice, and be accountable.

- **Communication:** Emphasize the importance of vocal and non-vocal communication on the ice. Players should be calling for passes, directing traffic, and letting teammates know where they are.

- **Team Play:** Encourage unselfish play, including quick puck movement and passing rather than taking unnecessary individual risks. Reinforce the importance of team success over individual success.
 - **Leadership:** Develop leadership qualities in the players, including setting good examples, motivating teammates, and contributing positively to the team dynamic.
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Sample Weekly Practice Structure:

1. **Warm-Up (5-10 minutes):**
 - Light skating and agility drills to get the players warmed up and ready for more intense activity.
 2. **Skill Development (15-20 minutes):**
 - Focus on a specific skill like passing, shooting, or stickhandling.
 3. **Tactical Drills (15-20 minutes):**
 - Work on team-oriented skills like breakouts, forechecking, or defensive positioning.
 4. **Small-Sided Games (15-20 minutes):**
 - Play 3v3 or 4v4 games to work on skills in game-like situations.
 5. **Cool Down (5 minutes):**
 - Light skating or stretching, along with individual feedback and team motivation.
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Key Tips for 12U Coaches:

- **Focus on Hockey IQ:** Encourage players to develop a strong understanding of the game and the ability to read plays and make quick decisions.
- **Challenge Players:** Push players to improve by introducing challenging drills and game situations. Set high expectations but ensure that each player is supported in their growth.
- **Emphasize Teamwork:** Reinforce the idea that hockey is a team sport, and success comes from working together both on and off the ice.
- **Positive Feedback:** Keep the atmosphere supportive, focusing on both effort and skill development, and celebrate individual and team achievements.

By the end of the season, 12U players should be refining their individual skills, improving their game sense, and gaining confidence in their ability to contribute to team success, setting them up for further growth in the sport.

14U Bantams

Teaching **14U hockey players** (ages 13-14) involves building upon their foundational skills while introducing **advanced concepts**, **strategic thinking**, and **position-specific play**. At this stage, players are ready for more complex systems, higher-level tactics, and a deeper understanding of their roles on the ice. Here's a breakdown of what to focus on throughout the season:

Early Season Focus: Skill Refinement & Advanced Hockey Concepts

1. Skating & Edge Work At 14U, skating continues to be the foundation of all other skills. The focus is on refining **speed**, **agility**, and **balance**.

- **Power Skating:** Continue refining long strides, especially focusing on generating speed and power through proper technique. Work on keeping a low center of gravity for better speed and balance.
- **Edge Control:** Master **tight turns** and **crossovers** (both forward and backward). Players should be able to pivot with speed and control.
- **Backward Skating and Crossovers:** Perfect backward skating techniques, and add **backward crossovers** for smoother transitions and better positioning during play.
- **Acceleration:** Develop quick starts and short bursts of speed, focusing on powerful first strides for improved acceleration.

2. Stickhandling & Puck Protection At 14U, players should be able to handle the puck under pressure and in tight spaces, while also protecting the puck effectively.

- **Advanced Stickhandling:** Teach quick dekes, toe drags, and fakes. Players should learn to handle the puck at high speeds while maintaining control in tight spaces.
- **Puck Protection:** Focus on using body positioning to protect the puck from defenders. Work on using the body and stick to shield the puck while skating in traffic.
- **Stickhandling Under Pressure:** Create drills where players must stickhandle while being pressured by defenders. Work on keeping the puck close to the body and using quick movements to evade checking.

3. Passing & Receiving By 14U, passing should be fast and precise, especially in game-like situations. Players need to work on passing while skating and under pressure.

- **Passes on the Move:** Focus on passing while skating, especially in tight spaces and during breakouts. Teach players to pass to open areas, leading their teammates into space.
- **Receiving Passes:** Continue working on receiving passes with soft hands, focusing on absorbing the puck smoothly and transitioning quickly into a play.

- **Passing Under Pressure:** Increase the difficulty by having players pass while being forechecked or pressured by defenders. This helps them make quick decisions and improve their decision-making skills.
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Mid-Season Focus: Advanced Tactical Play & Systems

1. Shooting & Scoring At this stage, players should be comfortable with different types of shots and should focus on improving shooting accuracy, quick release, and shooting in game situations.

- **Quick Release Shots:** Teach how to get shots off with a quick release, especially wrist shots and snap shots, when under pressure.
- **One-Timer Shots:** Focus on perfecting the one-timer. Work on timing and positioning, as this shot is often used during power plays.
- **Accuracy & Placement:** Stress the importance of shooting for specific spots on the net (e.g., top corners, low far post), rather than just shooting for power. Incorporate drills that challenge players to shoot accurately while under pressure.
- **Screen Shots & Deflections:** Teach players how to shoot through traffic and how to position themselves to deflect shots on net.

2. Offensive Play & Systems This is the time to focus on **team offensive systems, breakouts, and zone entries**, as well as improving individual offensive skills.

- **Breakout Techniques:** Teach players how to transition quickly from defense to offense. Focus on **short, crisp passes** and **supporting the puck**. Work on skating to open areas to receive breakout passes.
- **Zone Entries:** Focus on different ways to enter the offensive zone—either by carrying the puck in or by dumping it and pursuing the puck. Teach players when each method is appropriate.
- **Offensive Zone Play:** Introduce **cycle drills**, where players work on controlling the puck down low and cycling it to create shooting opportunities. Emphasize movement without the puck to open passing lanes.
- **Support the Puck Carrier:** Teach players how to always support the puck carrier by being available for quick passes, especially during fast breaks.

3. Defensive Play & Systems At 14U, the focus is on **defensive positioning, gap control**, and learning defensive systems. Players need to understand their roles both individually and as part of a defensive unit.

- **Gap Control:** Teach players how to maintain the right defensive gap between themselves and the puck carrier. They should understand when to close the gap and when to give a little space to force a play.

- **Defensive Zone Coverage:** Continue refining **man-to-man defense** and introduce **zone defense**. Players need to understand where to position themselves to block shooting lanes and win battles along the boards.
 - **Stick Positioning:** Work on using the stick to poke check the puck away from opponents while staying disciplined. Teach players to use their stick to intercept passes and disrupt the opposition's plays.
 - **Clearing the Puck:** Teach how to efficiently clear the puck out of the defensive zone, whether by passing to a teammate or by using a quick, hard clearing attempt off the glass or boards.
 - **Backchecking:** Focus on the importance of **backchecking** (getting back to defend quickly) and supporting teammates during defensive transitions.
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Late Season Focus: Team Play, Leadership, and Mental Toughness

1. Special Teams Play At this stage, players need to understand **power play** and **penalty kill** strategies and how to contribute to these units.

- **Power Play Strategies:** Focus on creating passing lanes and using quick puck movement to find open shooting opportunities. Teach players the fundamentals of **umbrella** and **overload** power play systems.
- **Penalty Kill:** Teach positioning and the importance of blocking shooting lanes, pressuring puck carriers, and clearing the puck when possible. Focus on staying disciplined while killing penalties.
- **Faceoff Play:** Continue to work on faceoff skills. Teach players how to use different strategies to win faceoffs in both the offensive and defensive zones. Teach quick reactions and positioning for faceoffs in special teams situations.

2. Advanced Game Situations As players mature, understanding complex game situations becomes more important. Players need to learn how to read the game and make decisions quickly.

- **Reading the Game:** Work on developing **hockey IQ** by teaching players to anticipate plays, read the opposition, and make quick decisions. Encourage them to recognize **offensive and defensive situations** as they happen.
- **Situational Hockey:** Teach players how to manage different game scenarios, like when to be aggressive and when to play conservatively (e.g., when to use the goalie as an outlet during a **breakout** or when to clear the puck instead of holding possession).
- **Transitioning:** Focus on quick transitions from offense to defense and vice versa. Work on getting the puck out of the defensive zone efficiently and moving into the offensive zone quickly.

3. Leadership & Mental Toughness At 14U, players should be developing leadership qualities and learning how to be resilient during tough games.

- **Teamwork & Communication:** Reinforce the importance of **positive communication** on and off the ice. Encourage players to lead by example in both their work ethic and attitude.
 - **Mental Toughness:** Teach players how to stay calm under pressure, maintain focus during tight games, and bounce back from mistakes. Introduce visualization techniques and strategies for staying mentally sharp during games.
 - **Personal Accountability:** Encourage players to take responsibility for their individual development and to support their teammates in their growth.
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Sample Weekly Practice Structure:

1. **Warm-Up (5-10 minutes):**
 - Light skating and dynamic stretching to get players ready for the practice session.
 2. **Skill Development (15-20 minutes):**
 - Focus on one or two key skills such as shooting, passing, or defensive positioning.
 3. **Tactical Drills (15-20 minutes):**
 - Focus on offensive and defensive systems (e.g., breakouts, special teams play, or zone entries).
 4. **Small-Sided Scrimmages (15-20 minutes):**
 - Use 3v3 or 4v4 games to give players the opportunity to apply skills in game-like situations.
 5. **Cool Down (5 minutes):**
 - Light skating or stretching. Use this time to review what players learned and give individual feedback.
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Key Tips for 14U Coaches:

- **Encourage Leadership:** As players mature, empower them to take on leadership roles, whether it's leading by example, motivating teammates, or contributing during critical moments of the game.
- **Build Confidence:** Challenge players with more complex drills and game scenarios, but make sure they feel supported. Help them gain confidence in their abilities.
- **Focus on Hockey IQ:** Encourage players to think the game and develop a deep understanding of strategies, positioning, and decision-making.
- **Promote Team Play:** Reinforce the importance of team play, communication, and supporting teammates both on and off the ice.

By the end of the season, 14U players should have refined their individual skills, developed an understanding of advanced game tactics, and improved their hockey IQ. They will be ready to face more competitive levels of hockey as they transition to higher levels of play.

Mustang Hockey Terminology

Four Areas of Attack:

- **BO (Break Out):** Key strategies for moving the puck out of the defensive zone.
- **BONZ (Break Out Neutral Zone):** Transition strategies in the neutral zone.
- **LRF (Line Rush For):** Importance of width and depth in offensive rushes with speed.
- **IZO (In Zone Offense):** Strategies for offensive play within the opponent's zone.

Fundamentals Of Defense:

- **Forecheck:** Designed to recover the puck in our offensive zone by taking away the middle of the ice and forcing opponents to the side walls, reducing their pass options by 50%.
- **Forecheck Neutral Zone:** Similar to the forecheck, but in the neutral zone, reducing the opponent's time and space with the puck.
- **Line Rush Against (LRA):** Back pressure is critical. Defensemen must take away ice between the dots, and backchecking forwards must come back between the dots. Give ice on the walls, not the middle.
- **Defensive Zone Coverage:** Start by defending the "house" area, where 90% of goals are scored. Players must understand this area and our shifting options as the opponent passes the puck to create scoring opportunities.

Basic Hockey Coaching Acronyms

- **F:** Forward
- **C:** Center
- **LW:** Left Wing
- **RW:** Right Wing
- **D:** Defenseman
- **G:** Goaltender

Coaching & Strategy Terms

- **PP:** Power Play (when a team has more players on the ice due to a penalty)
- **PK:** Penalty Kill (when a team is shorthanded due to a penalty)
- **NZ:** Neutral Zone (the middle area of the ice)
- **DZ:** Defensive Zone (the area in front of a team's own net)

- **OZ:** Offensive Zone (the area in front of the opponent's net)
 - **GAP:** Gap Control (the distance between a defenseman and an opposing forward)
 - **D-Zone Coverage:** Defensive Zone Coverage (how a team defends in their own zone)
 - **F1, F2, F3:** Forecheckers (forwards in a structured forechecking system)
 - F3 - Always high and supporting
 - F1 - Mad Attacker: Attack puck with **URGENCY!**
 - F2 - Take away support
 - **D1, D2:** Defensemen in a system or breakout strategy
 - **INSIDE THE DOTS:** The middle $\frac{1}{3}$ of the ice, marked by the dots
 - **OUTSIDE THE DOTS:** The outer $\frac{2}{3}$ of the ice
 - **HOUSE:** Area from the posts to the dots, extending to the top of the circles. (both in OZ & DZ)
 - **SLOT:** The area between the dots in both OZ and DZ
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Game & Statistical Terms

- **SOG:** Shots on Goal
 - **GAA:** Goals Against Average (goals allowed per game by a goalie)
 - **SV%:** Save Percentage (percentage of shots a goalie stops)
 - **PIM:** Penalty Minutes
 - **FO%:** Faceoff Win Percentage
 - **TOI:** Time on Ice (amount of time a player spends on the ice)
 - **+/- (Plus-Minus):** A statistic measuring goal differential while a player is on the ice
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Drills & Practice Terms

- **AGILITY:** Quick movements for foot speed and reaction
- **ESC:** Edgework, Skating, and Control
- **PPW:** Puck Protection Work
- **SAQ:** Speed, Agility, and Quickness

Specialized Hockey Coaching Acronyms

Coaching & Tactical Systems

- **1-2-2:** A common forechecking system with one forward pressuring, two supporting, and two defensemen back. [1-2-2 Forecheck Explained | Ice Hockey Systems Inc.](#)
- **2-1-2:** A more aggressive forecheck with two forwards pressuring deep. [2-1-2 Strong Side Forecheck: Hockey Forecheck System](#)
- **1-3-1:** A structured power-play formation or neutral zone trap. [Trap Explanation](#)
- **D-to-D:** Defense-to-Defense pass
- **RIM:** Rim Play (puck sent along the boards to escape pressure) [Neutral Zone Regroup Tactics and Options for Quick Offense](#)
- **REGROUP:** A tactical reset where players back up and reorganize [Bing Videos](#)
- **DZC:** Defensive Zone Coverage (how players cover in the defensive zone) [HOCKEY BASICS FOR BEGINNERS: POSITIONING AND ZONE COVERAGE](#)
- **NZT:** Neutral Zone Trap (a defensive strategy to slow down the opposing attack) [Bing Videos](#)
- **WALL PLAY:** Using the boards to protect the puck and make plays
- **GRETZKY ESCAPE:** Curling away from a defender to create time and space for a play

Goaltending-Specific Acronyms

- **RVH:** Reverse Vertical Horizontal (a goaltending stance used near the post)
- **VH:** Vertical Horizontal (another post-sealing technique for goalies)
- **T-PUSH:** A strong lateral push for goalies to move across the crease
- **C-CUTS:** Crossover Cuts (used by goalies for small movements in the crease)
- **BUTTERFLY:** The common stance goalies drop into for low shots
- **GTE:** Goalie Tracking Efficiency (how well a goalie follows the puck)
- **RSV:** Recovery Save (goalie making a save after an initial stop)

Offensive Strategy & Skill Development

- **NET FRONT PRESENCE:** Positioning a player in front of the opposing net to screen, await rebounds, or make plays
 - **PUCK SUPPORT:** Supporting the puck carrier by providing passing options
 - **SOFT CHIP:** A controlled puck dump to avoid icing or create a forechecking opportunity
 - **DELAY:** Holding up play to allow teammates to enter the zone
 - **CYCLE:** A passing and movement strategy in the offensive zone
 - **HIGH TO LOW:** A passing play from the blue line to a player down low
 - **LOW TO HIGH:** A passing play from down low to a player on the blue line
 - **NET DRIVE:** Driving hard to the opponent's net for a scoring chance
 - **DOT-LANE DRIVE:** Driving into the offensive zone along the faceoff dots
 - **SCISSOR:** A deceptive move where the puck carrier crosses paths with a teammate to confuse defenders
 - **GIVE N' GO:** Pass to a teammate and skate into a new position
 - **DROP PASS:** Leave the puck in one spot for a teammate to skate into it
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Defensive Strategy & Systems

- **BOX+1:** A defensive system where four players form a box, and one pressures the puck [Box Plus 1 Dz Coverage](#)
 - **STRONG SIDE:** The side of the ice where the puck is currently in play
 - **WEAK SIDE:** The side of the ice opposite of where the puck is
 - **LAYERING:** Defensive strategy ensuring multiple layers of coverage
 - **STICK ON PUCK:** A defensive technique of keeping the stick on the opponent's stick or puck
 - **ANG:** Angling (forcing an opponent into a bad position)
 - **GAP CONTROL:** Managing the space between a defender and an attacker
 - **ZC:** Zone Coverage (players defending in zones rather than man-to-man) [Bing Videos](#)
 - **MAN-ON-MAN:** A strategy where each defender covers one opponent throughout the play
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Special Teams (Power Play & Penalty Kill) and Practice Terms

- **PP1 / PP2:** First and second power-play units
- **PK1 / PK2:** First and second penalty-kill units

- **BUMP PLAY:** A quick inside pass to the house on the power play
 - **OVERLOAD:** A power-play formation with wall player, two point players, net front player, and a player below the goal line [Overload Power Play](#)
 - **UMBRELLA:** A power-play formation with one player high and two shooters at the circles [Bing Videos](#) [Bing Videos](#)
 - **DIAMOND PK:** A penalty-kill setup forming a diamond shape [Bing Videos](#)
 - **BOX PK:** A penalty-kill formation keeping four players in a tight box [Bing Videos](#)
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Drills & Practice-Specific Acronyms

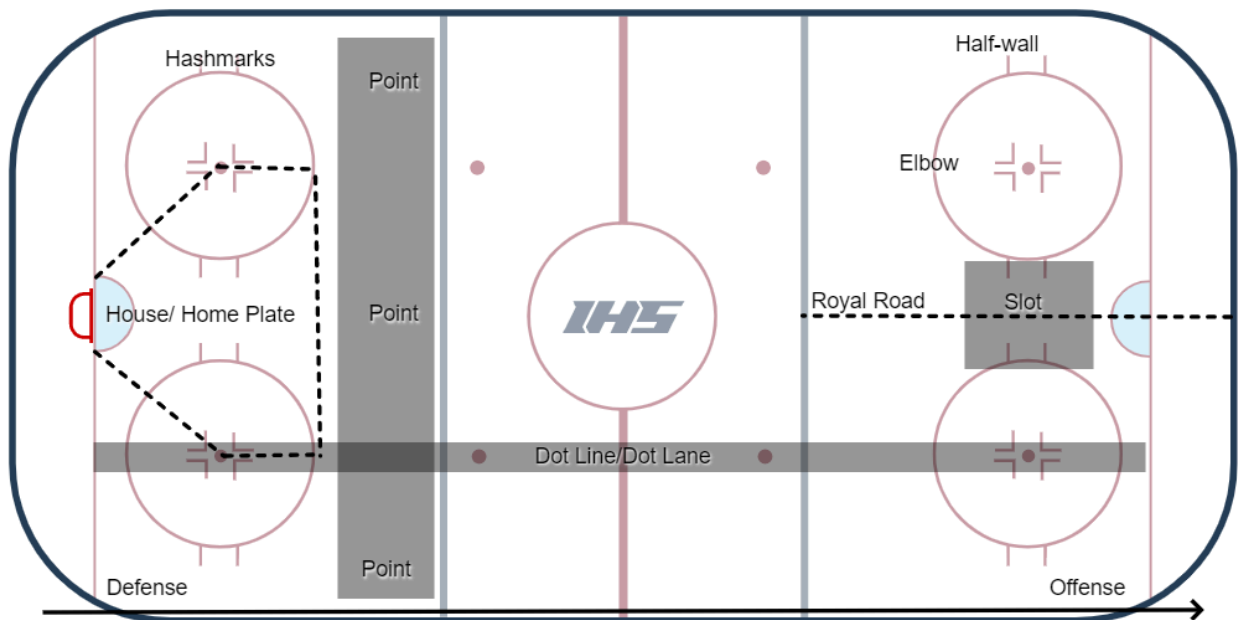
- **PPD:** Puck Protection Drill
- **BAG SKATE:** A hard conditioning skate with no pucks
- **EDGES:** Drills focusing on edge control and agility
- **PDM:** Puck Decision Making (reading the play and making smart passes)
- **SAQ:** Speed, Agility, and Quickness drills

Rink Terminology

Greg Revak

There have been a bunch of terms that have popped up in the recent past. We wanted to create a rink with the terminology showcasing a bunch of them. These geographical spots have become important as strategy, analytics, and tactics have come to be.

Let's take a look:



Breaking Down the Terminology

Hashmarks

These are on both sides of the faceoff circle. The outside hashmarks are often a reference point for wingers on the breakout.

House/Home Plate

This is the prime scoring area that teams want to get shots from. On the flip-side, this is the area defensively that teams want to protect. “Protect the house” being a common coach phrase.

This leads to the classic, [Quantity vs Quality](#) debate.

Dot Line/ Dot Lane

Too often you’ll see a player stay to the perimeter and eventually get squeezed out along the boards.

Getting off the boards and into the dot lane or middle ice is critical for modern day success. [Here is a link to the NHL Winnipeg Jets working on getting off the wall.](#)

Further reading - [We looking at Auston Matthews improved defense at center by staying inside when supporting play](#)

Point

Commonly this is where defenders stand. Shots from here suck and lead to very few goals. In [Point shots suck](#), we break down their inefficiency on multiple levels.

Fewer and fewer coaches are having their defensemen stay here and are having them activate off the point more.

Half-Wall

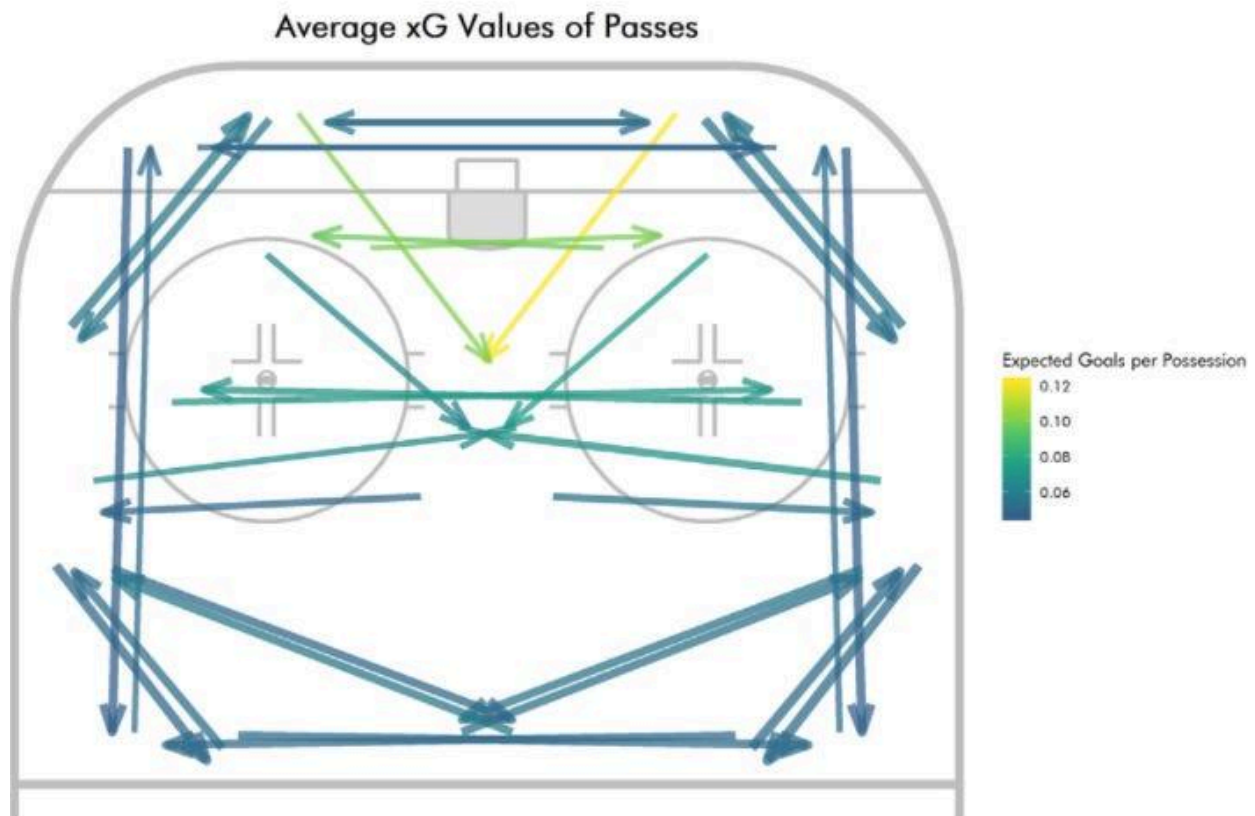
In the offensive zone, between defender and winger guarding the point
Commonly used on the Power Play. E.g. "Working the half-wall"

Elbow

Similar to a basketball court elbow. These are areas where many defensive players and systems overlap and can cause confusion when forced to sort.

Slot

This is the inner area of the rink that has the best chance at resulting in a goal. Here is a chart showcasing passes on the power play. Yellow and green show higher expected goals.



[Source \(Hockey Graphs\)](#)

Royal Road

This is an imaginary line that splits the zone into two. As the puck goes across this line, goalies must make adjustments.

Analytics have shown how passes across this imaginary line [dramatically increase the chance of a goal](#) on the proceeding shot. Another [analytics example](#).

Game Day Charting

"Game day charting in hockey is crucial for understanding player performance in the four key areas of offense and defense. At a minimum, coaches should be charting shots and turnovers."

Team Performance Metrics:

- Shots on Goal (SOG)
- Shot Attempts (on net, missed, blocked)
- Faceoff Wins/Losses
- Power Play Opportunities & Efficiency
- Penalty Kill Success Rate
- Zone Entries (Controlled vs. Dump-ins)
- Turnovers & Takeaways

Individual Player Tracking:

- Plus/Minus Rating (+/-)
- Goals, Assists, and Points
- Hits Delivered & Taken
- Blocked Shots
- Penalties Taken & Drawn
- Faceoff Percentage (for centers)
- Shift Length & Frequency

Goaltending Statistics:

- Saves & Save Percentage (SV%)

- Goals Against Average (GAA)
- High-Danger vs. Low-Danger Shots Faced
- Rebound Control & Second-Chance Opportunities
- Puck Handling & Passing

Situational Play Analysis:

- Scoring Chances For & Against
- Odd-Man Rushes (For & Against)
- Shots in the “House” Area
- Good/Bad Line Changes
- Penalties Good/Bad
- Backcheck Good/Bad (Use of Dots)

Date: / /

Opponent: _____

Shots For

period 1: _____
period 2: _____
period 3: _____
total: _____

Shots Against

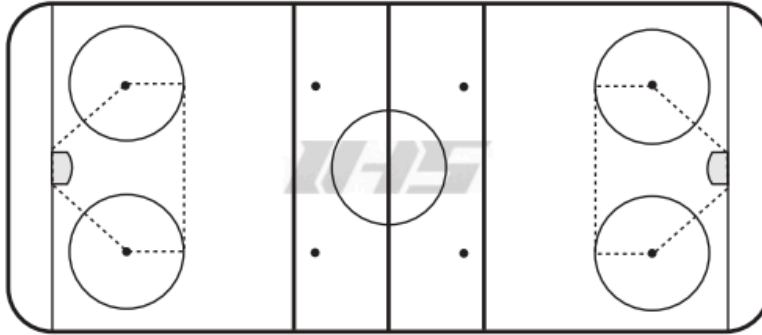
period 1: _____
period 2: _____
period 3: _____
total: _____

Grade A For

period 1: _____
period 2: _____
period 3: _____
total: _____

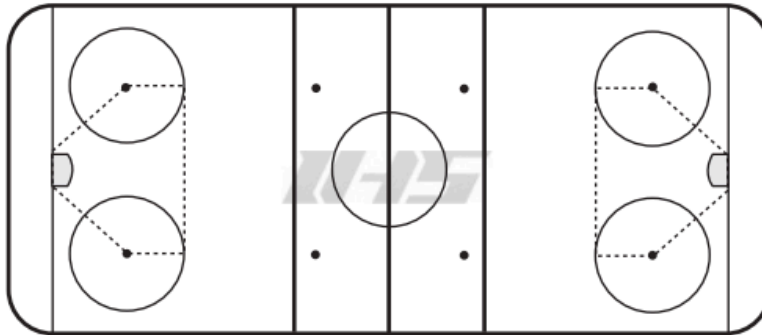
Grade A Against

period 1: _____
period 2: _____
period 3: _____
total: _____



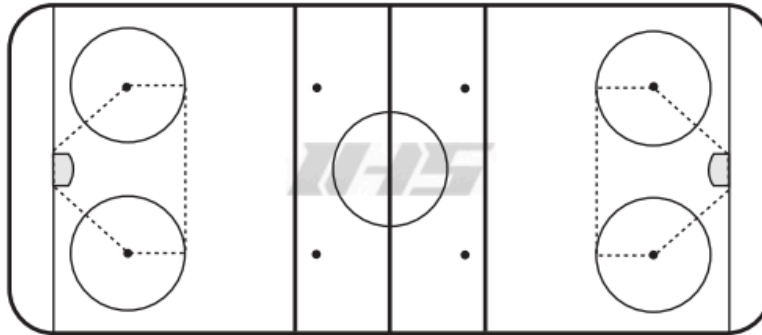
Period 1

Shots For _____ Shots Against _____ Grade A For _____ Grade A Against _____



Period 2

Shots For _____ Shots Against _____ Grade A For _____ Grade A Against _____



Period 3

Shots For _____ Shots Against _____ Grade A For _____ Grade A Against _____

Shot chart provided by Ice Hockey Systems Inc.

TURNOVERS

Date:

Opponent:

Location:



| | Offensive Zone | Defensive Zone | Neutral Zone | Blocked Shots |
|---|----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | |
| 3 | | | | |