



HOCKEY CANADA

CANADIAN PLAYER PATHWAY

U11 (Atom) Player Pathway Policy

2020-2021 Season



Section 2: ***U11 Policy and Recommendations***

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Hockey Canada Policy for U11 Hockey

Player Evaluation / Selection / Tryouts

- **(REQUIREMENT)** No player evaluation / selection or tryouts prior to or during the first week of school.
 - No player evaluation / selection or tryouts during the off-season phase (previous season, including March through August).
 - No player evaluation/ selection or tryouts during the first week of school where school starts the week after Labour Day.
 - Where school starts prior to Labour Day, there must be four skates/practices starting the week following Labour Day before player evaluation / selection or tryouts commence.
- **(REQUIREMENT)** Must offer a minimum of four practices/skill sessions prior to formal player evaluation / selection or tryouts starting.
- **(REQUIREMENT)** Must have a minimum of three formal player evaluation / selection or tryout sessions.
 - **(RECOMMENDATION)** – One skills session, one small-area games session, one formal game
 - **(RECOMMENDATION)** - Players should not try out based on a specific position but should be encouraged to play both forward and defense in tryouts.
 - **(RECOMMENDATION)** - Players should be selected for teams based on skill, not positional preference.

Development Phase

- **(REQUIREMENT)** Must be a period of development time following team selection and prior to the start of the regular season.

Fair and Equal Ice Time

- **(REQUIREMENT)** Fair and equal ice time is designed to ensure that all players get the same opportunity to contribute to the outcome of games, regardless of skill or ability. A coach's responsibility is to develop all players to contribute. Shortening of the bench is not permitted. All players should receive fair and as close to equal as possible ice time, including equal opportunities on special teams.
- Positional rotation:
 - **(RECOMMENDATION)** All skaters are to rotate through all positions to ensure each player has the opportunity to try out each position (forward – LW/C/RW and defence -LD/RD) at least once.
 - **(RECOMMENDATION)** All players get a chance to start the game and play end-of-game situations.
- Goaltender rotation:
 - Full-time goaltenders allowed.
 - Goaltenders rotate for equal amount of playing time throughout the regular season and playoffs.
 - **(RECOMMENDATION)** Goaltenders alternate games or split games as close to 50/50 as possible.
 - **(RECOMMENDATION)** Each goaltender plays the final game in an equal number of tournaments.
 - **(RECOMMENDATION)** The rotation schedule be done in consultation with the goaltender and parents. (share games or alternate playing full games)
 - **(RECOMMENDATION)** The goaltender not playing the game be allowed to play as a skater.

Playoffs

- **(REQUIREMENT)** Must be tournament-style format versus elimination rounds

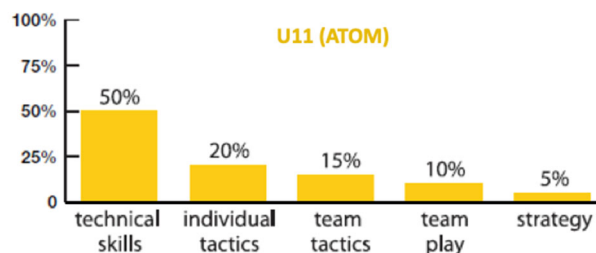
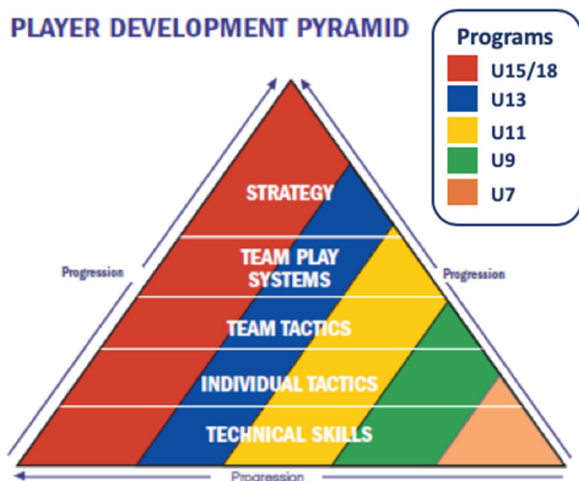
Seasonal Structure

- **(REQUIREMENT)** Preparation phase
 - See Player Evaluation / Selection / Tryouts above.
- **(REQUIREMENT)** Development phase
 - Teams must have a period of development time following Player evaluation / selection or tryouts prior to the start of the regular season.
- **(REQUIREMENT)** Development and regular season phase
 - Recommended maximum of 45 games per year (including exhibition, league, tournaments and playoffs).
 - Recommended Seasonal breaks
 - Season should allow for two seasonal breaks (not including Christmas/long weekends)
 - Seasonal break would be a minimum five days without a scheduled game or mandatory practice.
- **(REQUIREMENT)** Playoff phase
 - Tournament style.
- **(REQUIREMENT)** Off Season Phase
 - Recommend limited skills-based on ice training making more time for multisport activity

Position-Specific Training

- Small-area games in practice / station-based practices / skill-focused drills
- Only 15% of practice time should be spent on team play and strategy/systems with 85% of practice time spent on skills and tactics.
- Basic positional play and rules of the game can be introduced at the end of the previous Novice season or prior to the start of the U11 regular season. Basic defensive-zone positioning, offside, icing, etc., can be introduced during the ice sessions prior to tryouts or after teams are selected.
- Players should rotate through forward and defence in the first half of the year and then may move to more consistent positions in the second half. Recommended rotation over a five-game segment would be: LW/C/RW/RD/LD.
- Limit position-specific specialization (except goalies – recommend goalie not playing plays as a skater).

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PYRAMID



Section 3: ***Rationale for U11 Programming***

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U11 Player Pathway – Rationale

Dr. Stephen Norris has consulted with Hockey Canada in the areas of Player Development and Performance Programming for a number of years. Dr. Norris has also played a key role as a consultant to the 'Own the Podium' program high performance/technical groups leading up to a number of Winter Olympic Games. He was one of the five founding members and contributors to the 'Canadian Sport for Life' movement focusing on athlete/participant development and supported Hockey Canada in the design of the Hockey Canada Long Term Player Development model and the Canadian Player Pathways model.

In each area of the policy's requirements outlined below, rationale has been provided and has been supplemented by Dr. Norris in the shaded areas.

Tryouts cannot be scheduled prior to the start of the school year. (REQUIREMENT)

- Give minor hockey associations and parents back the summer – the season does not need to start this early only to be finished at the end of January or early in February (start later and end later).
- Give minor hockey associations a chance to get organized and begin planning.
- The start of school year can be very stressful for young players, and they do not need to add hockey tryouts starting at the same time as the school year.

There are very serious considerations that need to be addressed here. First, the notion of tryouts taking place weeks, if not months in advance of the actual season for this age group makes very little sense due to the realities of child development during these periods.

The summer months are a time where youngsters not only consolidate previous experiences, but also advance their competency due to aspects such as recovery from earlier specificity, demonstrate adaptation of all previous experiences to new situations and activities over the summer months, and reveal growth and development opportunities that occur naturally – physical, psychological, cognitive, motor development, social, etc.

Second, everyone should understand that the return-to-school period (both the couple of weeks before, the week of and the 'wash-in period' until the student is settled back into the routine) is an extremely stressful period in terms of the biological impact upon the student.

Must have minimum of four practices and/or skill sessions prior to formal tryouts starting. (REQUIREMENT)

- A player's first experience in the new hockey season should not be a formal tryout – this gives all players the opportunity to get back on the ice in a more 'player-friendly' scenario.
- Help level the playing field; not all players have a chance to go to hockey schools or prep camps prior to the start of the season.
- Provide minor hockey associations the opportunity to run their own prep camp instead of members spending money outside the association.



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There is a great benefit for children to be offered the opportunity to participate in four ice sessions prior to formal selection or evaluation. Players feel both more relaxed and are able to perform at a better skill level following four ice sessions, rather than the alternative of being evaluated in their first time back on the ice. By providing these opportunities, players are now in situation where stress has been mitigated and they are able to showcase their ability on the ice.

Tryouts must be minimum of three formal tryout sessions. Recommendation is one skills session, one small-area games session and one formal game. (REQUIREMENT)

- Players need a fair chance to be evaluated – a standardized process will show transparency, fairness and consistency.
- Provide coaches with the foundation for a development plan based on a solid and quantifiable evaluation.

This follows the previous point of providing ALL young players with the opportunity to re-engage with the hockey. For example, it would be unacceptable for a school in the first week of September to give children an exam that they must pass, or else the child would not be permitted to take that subject during the school year. This would be unacceptable to parents, yet this is the impact of tryouts early in the process before anything is taught.

Must have a period of development time following team selection and prior to the start of the regular season. (REQUIREMENT)

- It is very important to provide coaches with the opportunity to develop and improve their players skills prior to getting into organized games.
- The progression should be skills before tactics and tactics before systems.
- This will eliminate or reduce pressure and or focus on winning.

As outlined above, professional and/or knowledgeable individuals wishing to provide positive developmental experiences for children or youth would reinforce the need for an instructional or practice component prior to the start of the season. With the implementation of this policy, we are moving forward to not only accept, but welcome development opportunities for the betterment of players.

Playoffs must be tournament-style format versus elimination rounds (REQUIREMENT)

- Give all teams the chance to play to same end point in the season.
- All players deserve the same chance to play to the end of the year.
- More teams and more players playing longer into the season.
- Allows more rest and recovery within the season and the regular season schedule can be spread out.
- Greater opportunity for more players to participate in different activities.

Often in Canada, minor hockey associations finish their regular season at the end of January or beginning of February. This is done to accommodate a protracted playoff scenario that is mimicking what professional adults or semi-professional age-group development teams do.

However, it is important to keep in mind that this is minor hockey designed for children and youth who are developing and wanting to play hockey for as long as possible each season. After the first round of this playoff format (often the first week), 50% of the teams are no longer playing and with each successive round, 50% of the



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remaining teams get knocked out. This means that weeks before the end of the Canadian winter, we no longer have kids playing hockey, at least in terms of the original MHA connection.

What happens with an elimination-style playoff structure is teams look for tournaments and exhibition games to keep playing at least until the end of March. However, the unintentional consequences are increased costs to each participant due to travel, accommodation, food, entry fees, the associated costs of tournaments and even lost wages/salaries for parents. It is recommended that minor associations look at competition structures that keep their participants playing until as late in the season as possible. There are plenty of opportunities for the experiences of external tournaments and exhibition games.

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