



Minor Novice MD

2021-22 Season

Resource Guide

Updated: September 2021



Introduction

“Developing Skills First”

The Hockey Canada Under 8 Programming is essential component in developing the hockey skills of all young kids playing the game in Canada. The Hockey Canada Novice Skill Development resource is the official hockey curriculum of Hockey Canada.

How a player gets their initial taste of hockey is crucial. The first few years of hockey must be a positive experience full of fun and excitement.

The future of hockey lies with today's youth. Because of this, Hockey Canada has developed age appropriate programming as a way to encourage the growth of foundational skills. Minor hockey associations and coaches lead the implementation of the Initiation and Novice programs with the assistance of volunteers, parents and others associated with hockey. The programming must provide opportunities for a wide range of people to get involved in order to improve the quality of the hockey experience through sound instruction and enjoyable play.

The success of grassroots hockey programming is measured by the level of development young players achieve. To optimize these levels, dedicated adults must play a large role as leaders and teachers who will create a challenging and motivating environment for all young players. The goals and objectives of 8 & under programming are to:

- Teach all basic skills of hockey so players can enjoy the game.
- Assist in development and enhancement of physical literacy and basic motor patterns.
- Develop and encourage the concepts of being a team member through player participation in both on-ice and off-ice activities.
- Encourage aspects of fitness, fair play and cooperation while having fun.

Hockey Canada, Ontario Hockey Federation & Alliance Hockey recommend tiering for 7-year-old hockey programming to meet the mandate set by the Ontario Hockey Federation for the 2018-19 season.

It is recommended that Associations tier their top eighteen 7-year olds and place them onto a team. Those eighteen players would then be divided into skill-based lines; with like-skilled players from each team playing against each other.

[Request for Playing up for Players 8 & Under FORM](#)

“Learning the basic skills at a young age will set the foundation for everything a player will accomplish in the game of hockey”

Corey McNabb, Director of Hockey Development Programs, Hockey Canada



Seasonal Structure

- ✓ Associations submit their Team registration by August 1st 2021
- ✓ Minor Novice MD League is reviewed at the ALLIANCE Hockey Structure Meeting

1: Development Phase – September 13th, 2021 to October 31st, 2021

During the development phase, coaches should be focused on Skill development. The ideal practice to game ratio has been identified as 3:1, or three practice sessions to one game played.

The goal for every MHA should be to set aside time where young players have more practices than games. The Hockey Canada Skills Manual provides coaches with a series of well-crafted practice plans (Ice Sessions) that focus on developing fundamental movement skills like striding, turning and stopping, manipulation skills like shooting, passing, puck control and the very important motor skills of agility, balance, coordination. All of these components should be a part of player-centred skill development in a fun and safe environment that promotes self-confidence.

- Player Evaluations focused on skill development
- Ideally 16 Ice sessions over an 8-week period
- Locally scheduled exhibition matchups (6 maximum)

2: Regular Season Phase – November 1st, 2021 to March 29th, 2020

The regular season phase represents the bulk of the season. The practice to game ratio shifts to 2:1 or two practices for every one game played.

It is important that our coaches continue to focus on Skill Development during practice. Once again, the Hockey Canada Novice Skills Manual provides a wide variety of resources in the form of practice as well as drills that will assist in the delivery of practice that meet the skills development needs of your young players. Hockey Canada has developed additional resources to support coaches in their practice plans. The [Hockey Canada Network](#), [Drill Hub](#), and the [Novice programming](#) all contain age-appropriate and skill-specific resources to help the needs of your young hockey players.

Even though the regular season phase has a lower practice to game ratio (2:1) through the months of November to March, there are still up to 30+ possible practice sessions to support and encourage your players through.

- 18 weeks, game play against other ALLIANCE Associations
 - **Note, Christmas Break (December 23 to January 1) and March Break (March 12-18) are given as weeks off throughout the season.**
- Matchups to be set by ALLIANCE Hockey & games will be scheduled by the local Association Ice Scheduler. Allowed an additional 2 exhibition games during this time.



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- Divisional play, idea to play locally to help travel. Three divisions East, Central and West. (Figure 2)

3: Season- End Festival – April 8-10, 2022

ALLIANCE Hockey U8 (Minor Novice) MD Festival will be hosted on the weekend of April 8-10, 2022, host TBD. All teams will participate in the fun festival that will see each team play a total of 4 games (2 games/day). Will try to accommodate that Teams play against teams from another division that they would not have seen during the season.

Figure 1: U8 (Minor Novice) Season Structure – Full Season of Half-Ice Play

Seasonal Structure			
Months	September – October	November – March	April
Phase	Development Phase	Regular Season Phase	Season End Festival
Ice Set-Up	Half ice Games	Half Ice Games	Half Ice Games
Balance	30%	60%	10%
Volume	Up to 8 weeks (October 31 st)	19 weeks (March 27 th)	1 Weekend
48 Practices	18 Practice Sessions	30 Practice Sessions	
25-30 games	6 Exhibition Games	20 Game Season (2 Exhibition Games)	4 Games
3 Jamboree/ Tournaments	0 Jamborees/ Festivals	3 Jamboree/ Festivals (This includes Christmas break)	Alliance U8 (Minor Novice) Festival

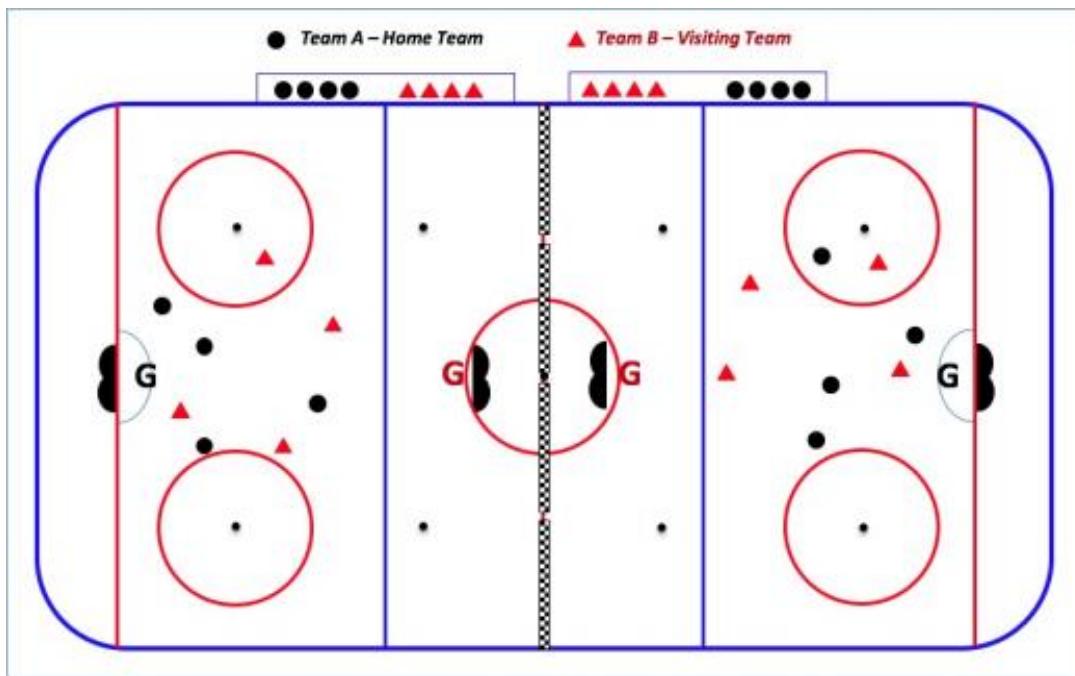
Figure 2: U8 (Minor Novice) Divisions

U8 (Minor Novice) Divisions		
West	Central	East
London Bandits Black	Kitchener Jr Rangers Blue	Brantford 99ers
North London Nationals	Kitchener Jr Rangers White	Burlington Bulldogs
Oakridge Aeros	Stratford Warriors	Burlington Jr Raiders
Sarnia Jr Sting	Waterloo Wolves	Cambridge Hawks
West London Hawks	Woodstock Jr Navy Vets White	Hamilton Huskies Red

Game Play Guidelines

The game play format is referred to as the Two-Team Game Play Model (Figure 3). This model is based on each Minor Novice team being divided into two units and each unit playing one another on two halves of the ice. Each team is required to dress two goaltenders, one for each half-ice game.

Figure 3: Two Teams – Two Half-Ice Games Model



- In the two teams two half-ice games model, each team will consist of 18 players (16 skaters and two goaltenders) divided into two units of nine players. Each team unit of nine players will have one goaltender and eight skaters. In the case of fewer numbers, there will be allowances for players to double shift to ensure that there are always four players on the ice. **Coaches must make sure all players take turns double shifting.**
- The length of a game is 50 minutes (2 x 22.5-minute halves) plus a 3-minute warm-up.
- It is recommended that on each half of ice, the center spot should be marked to indicate where the face-off will take place. This is to be marked at the mid-point between both nets.
- When play is stopped due to the goaltender freezing the puck or a goal being scored, the referee will signal the attacking players to back off three meters. Once the attackers have backed off, the play may resume as soon as the possession team has control of the puck. In the event the puck goes out of play, the referee will provide a new puck to the non-offending team and the offending team will be required to provide the three-meter cushion.
- There is no center-ice (red) line and therefore, no icing.
- There are no blue-lines in play therefore, no offsides.



- The Home team shall defend the two nets at the ends of the rink, while the visiting team shall defend the center-ice nets.
- When the buzzer sounds to end the first half, the visiting team will switch benches, so players can play on the other half of the ice against the opposing team.
- Teams will share the respective player's benches with each team using the gate closest to the net they are defending.
- The main score clock may be used to keep time for both games simultaneously.
- No score will be recorded.
- Teams will be required to use and complete an official game sheet for each game for roster purposes (not scoring purposes). All game sheets are to be submitted to ALLIANCE Hockey Office as per usual practice.

Scaling down is important and the research shows that when children are more actively engaged, they touch the puck more often, have the puck on their stick longer, and are interacting with one another to a greater extent.

Dr. Stephen Norris, Consultant to Hockey Canada

Rules for Half-Ice Game Play

Playing Rules

- 4 vs 4 format – plus each team with a goaltender
- Each team is required to have two goaltenders, one for each half of the ice
- Three minute warm up
- Rink Set-up:
 - One set of barriers or two sets of barriers with a space in between for spare players
 - May be foam rink dividers or board system
- Net Size:
 - **Mandatory Small Nets (3' x 4')** nets are placed on edge of center circle and at both end zones in the normal position
- Puck Size:
 - **Mandatory 6 oz. Black Puck**
- Game Length:
 - **Two 22.5-minute halves**
 - Shift lengths are 90 seconds in duration with an automatic buzzer or whistle sounding to indicate player change. The clock continues to run throughout the 22.5-minute half.



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- Officials work to keep both games synchronized
- Players change on the fly
- If there are fewer than four players on the bench, the active player designated to stay out for the following shift must tag up at the bench prior to continuing play
- Face Offs
 - There will be two face-offs during the game: the first face-off will begin the game and the second face-off will begin the second half.

Shifts

- Player shifts are to be 90 seconds in length. A buzzer or whistle will sound to signal line changes.
- On the buzzer/whistle, players must relinquish control of the puck immediately and vacate the ice. The new players enter the ice immediately.
- Failure to immediately relinquish control of the puck or new players entering the ice surface prematurely may result in a penalty (see below) for the offending team.

Change of Possession

- When the goaltender freezes the puck → the official blows the whistle to indicate the attacking team backs off and defending team gets possession.
- When the puck is shot out of play → the offending team backs off and the official gives the non-offending team a new puck.

Penalties

- Minor penalties are noted by the officials briefly raising their arm to indicate that a penalty will be assessed. At the conclusion of the shift, the official notifies the coach of the infraction and the number of the offending player.
- If the offending team controls the puck after the infraction, the official blows the whistle and calls for a change of possession; the non-offending team is given room to play the puck (three-meter cushion)
- Should an infraction occur that would normally require a player to be ejected from the game (i.e. game misconduct, match penalty or gross misconduct), the player will be removed for the remainder of that game. Under these circumstances, teams shall not play short-handed and no game incident report is required.



Role of the Official

NOTE: SEE GAME PLAY GUIDELINES FOR GAME-SPECIFIC RULES

Hockey Canada recommends the inclusion of officials at the Novice level. At this level, a one-official system will be employed. While this is not an official Hockey Canada Officiating Program (HCOP) system, this section provides an outline to assist local officiating programs with integrating officials into this developmental stage of the game. The system provides officials with an opportunity to experience several aspects of officiating, while keeping the operating costs at a manageable level for the teams and minor hockey associations.

Benefits to Involving Officials in Half-Ice Hockey

There are numerous benefits for officials when considering the aspects of building foundational skills. This is a valuable opportunity for newer officials to put on their uniform, get on the ice in live action and learn basic aspects of being an official in a less formal and positive atmosphere. Basic skills include dropping pucks, skating skills, foundational positioning, spatial awareness, establishing good sightlines and making decisions such as goals and minor infractions.

This allows officials to apply newly-acquired information they received in their clinic in a game environment. It also provides an excellent opportunity for senior officials to mentor newcomers by shadowing them on the ice or evaluating them from the stands. The ability to mentor officials at ice level in this structure provides instantaneous feedback and assists in preparing these officials for full-ice games in a two- or three-official system.

Having an official for the half-ice games provides players with more structure than cross-ice games at the Initiation level. It also presents a more realistic game environment, while allowing the coaches to keep their focus on the players.

Officiating Procedures

Flexibility is an important component to operating in a one-official system within the Novice structure. There is no absolute way to handle every possible scenario. However, game flow and establishing a basic structure to the game is the primary focus. Officials will NOT be required to call infractions for icing or off-side as the appropriate rink dimensions and markings are not available.

Face-Offs

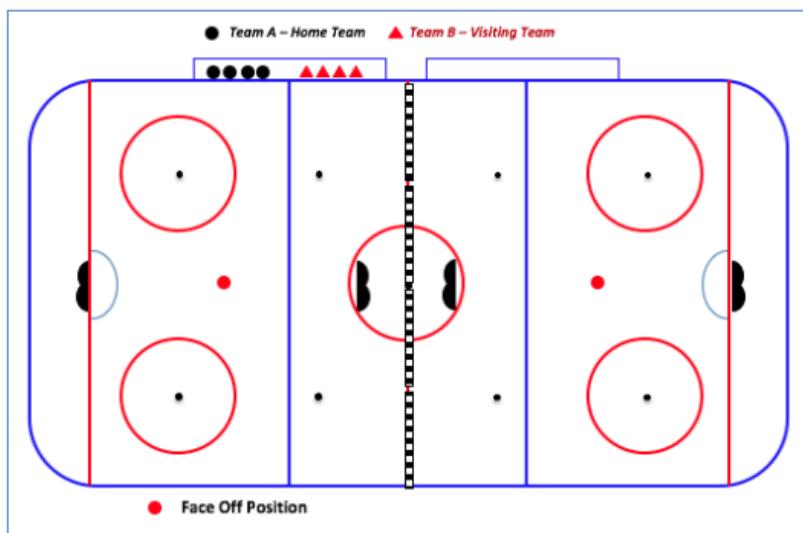
There will be one face-off location. This will be located approximately halfway between the goals (see Figure 4). Coaches and arena staff may mark the centre face-off location with a temporary marking for game play purposes.



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Figure 4: Location of the Face-Off Dot

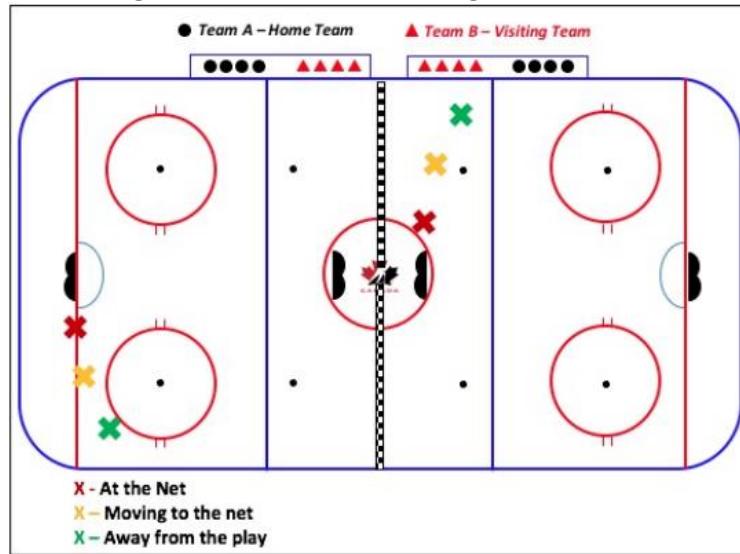


Positioning

Foundational positioning principles will be used. The concept of the ‘cone’ should be reserved for when full-ice play begins. Under the half-ice structure, approximate positioning should be used to get officials comfortable with their proximity to the goal (see Figure 5). Officials should follow the play approximately 2-3 meters behind the puck carrier. They should remain about one meter from the boards or playing area perimeters. The examples from Figure 5 show guidelines for establishing recommended end-zone positions.

Officials are encouraged to move towards the net on goal situations and away from the play towards the boards as play comes towards them, allowing players to pass by; the official can then follow up the ice at a safe distance.

Figure 5: End-Zone Positioning of the Official





Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When does the change to Half-Ice Novice Game Play take effect?

A: The Hockey Canada mandate for Half-Ice Novice Hockey Game Play takes effect at the beginning of the 2019-20 season. Members may choose to implement half-ice hockey sooner.

Q: What are the core requirements of the Novice Half-Ice Game Play Model?

A: The Novice Half-Ice Game Play Model was designed to maximize the opportunity to engage all players in the game. The core elements for this model are using running time, changing on the fly, no offside, no icing, no face-offs after goals and penalties are called.

Q: How will player development be affected if there is no offside or icing called during game play?

A: The Novice Game-Play Model is a 4 vs. 4 model (plus goaltenders) on half-ice. Learning offside and icing will come in time, but the primary focus on age-appropriate training and programming needs to be on skill development in the areas of skating, puck control, passing, receiving and shooting. Concepts like offside, icing, positional play and face-offs can be introduced at a later date when players move to the full-ice game-play model in the transition to Atom hockey.

Q: Are Novice teams permitted to identify a full-time goaltender?

A: The recommendation in the Novice Game-Play Model is that all players have an opportunity to play goal. All players should rotate through the goaltender position throughout the season. The Hockey Canada Long-Term Player Development Model encourages a wide range of skill development at a young age, and focusing on a single position may limit the opportunity to practice skills in all areas.

Q: Are Novice half-ice games required to be two 25-minute halves?

A: This is only a recommended timeframe for the game. The game time established for the Novice Game-Play Model is based on a 60-minute ice session. Ice sessions can be shorter or longer. If this is the case, adjust accordingly ensuring there is time for a short warm-up, two halves of play, and a short break between the two halves to make any adjustments that need to take place.

Q: Is the length of a shift in the Novice Half-Ice Game Play Model limited to 60 seconds?

A: The shift length is only a recommendation. Shifts may be up to 90 seconds or two minutes in length. This is at the discretion of the Member. However, it is important to reference the core requirements of the game to ensure the spirit of the game is maintained.

Q: What is the difference between a jamboree and a tournament?

A: A jamboree is designed to engage players in a fun environment and is the coming together of several players who are then placed onto teams. Games may or may not be competitive and the emphasis is on fun and fair play.

A tournament is defined as a schedule of games played among three or more teams, which follows an interlocking schedule and leads to an eventual winner.

Q: Are smaller nets required for the Novice Half-Ice Game format?

A: There is no requirement to use smaller nets for Novice games. With goaltenders in full equipment in net, regular nets (4x6) are a suitable option. However, small nets (3x4) are also acceptable.



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Q: Is there a need to draw the crease in for the net situated in the neutral zone?

A: There is no need to draw a crease for the neutral zone net(s). Each net should be placed just inside the centre circle which will provide a small marking to aid the goaltending in positioning themselves in front of the net. If there is no circle, a crease may be drawn on the ice.

Q: What are the advantages of practicing in small areas and playing half-ice games?

A: Small spaces equate to more engagement in the play and more activity for young players. Through the small-area station-based practices and cross-ice games, players are closer to the play at all times and have much more opportunity for puck touches. Regardless of the skill level or the ability of each player, their opportunities to be engaged in the play are doubled when the playing area is smaller. NHL analytics research has illustrated that all skill areas of the game increased substantially when players played in small spaces more suited to their age and skill level.

Q: What are the dimensions of a half-ice hockey game?

A: The average dimensions of a regular ice surface in Canada is 200 feet by 85 feet. The half-ice playing surface can be a maximum of 100 feet by 85 feet if the dividers are placed at the centre-ice line. In a study conducted by Hockey Alberta, the half-ice playing surface illustrated the same stride distance for a child as relative to the full sheet of ice for an adult.

Q: Is it a requirement to use a blue puck instead of a black puck and what are the advantages?

A: It is NOT a requirement to use a Blue Puck for Novice hockey. The regulation black puck weighs six ounces, while the blue puck weighs four ounces. Scaling down all aspects of practice and game play for players eight and under is very beneficial. The blue puck is an appropriate weight in relation to the height and weight of these young players. Use of the blue puck can promote proper mechanics in shooting, passing and carrying the puck.

Q: Should Novice players and/or Novice teams be tiered?

A: Grouping of players of like ability can be a very important principle for setting young players up for success and enjoyment. The focus of the Novice Game-Play Model is player development. It is important in both station-based practices and in half-ice game play that players be grouped by similar ability levels when possible or necessary.

It is recommended that prior to the start of the half-ice game(s), coaches of opposing teams may wish to discuss possible line combinations to ensure that the skill level of the players on the ice is similar; this will allow more puck touches and fun for all the players participating.

Q: Do the officials need to be fully registered?

A: This is at the discretion of the Member. It must be noted that the Novice Game-Play Model provides an excellent opportunity to introduce officials to the game.

Q: Do the officials have to wear the full officiating uniform?

A: If the Member elects to have officials work the Novice Game-Play Model, all officials on the ice need to wear the minimum of an officiating jersey with branch crest, black pants and a black CSA-approved helmet with a CSA-approved half visor.

Q: How does the official or coach keep game flow and not lose time on shifts when a puck goes out of play?

A: Officials are encouraged to keep additional pucks in their pocket in the event a puck is shot out of play. The official will simply provide a new puck to the non-offending team and play will resume.



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Q: What support is available for coaches at the Novice level?

A: The [NCCP Community Coach Stream](#) – Initiation Clinic is designed for Novice coaches who need to understand the proper instructional approach with children at this age.

The Community Coach Stream clinic is part of the new online NCCP Coaching Clinic available through the online Hockey University.

Recognizing the necessity to provide a positive experience for young hockey players, the Community Coach Stream – Initiation Clinic builds upon a number of values providing a qualitative experience, which include:

- Providing a safe environment in which to be introduced to fundamental skills.
- Developing an understanding of basic teamwork through participation in structured activities and adapted game-like situations.
- Introducing participants to the concepts of fair and cooperative play.
- Refining basic motor patterns and building self-confidence.
- Providing an environment that challenges individuals positively and rewards the participants for their efforts.
- Providing opportunities to experience a number of activities related in the building of a lifestyle of fitness and activity.

In addition to coach education, the Novice Skills Manual is a set of ice-session plans that are designed for the age-appropriate and skill-specific needs of young Novice players. These ice-session plans are available through the [Hockey Canada Network](#), [Hockey Canada Drill Hub](#).

Q: What guidelines should be followed when storing and setting up equipment at community arenas?

A: Each facility in Canada is unique and will have its own standard operating procedures when it comes to the storage, set-up and take-down of the portable board system or foam divider system. In many cases, municipalities have developed procedures to apply to all arenas within their jurisdiction.

It will be important to work with facility management to ensure proper protocols are being followed. This will maximize efficiency, ensure safe practices for all and promote a harmonious relationship between the arena staff and members of the local minor hockey association.

Q: Where can portable boards or foam barriers be purchased?

A: There are a number of suppliers for portable boards, foam barriers and small nets. It is advisable to check local sources to ensure best pricing on the shipping of products.

On a national level, two suppliers handle large-volume orders for these products.

Riley Manufacturing

5-460 Industrial Ave.

Woodstock, ON N4S 7L1

Telephone: 519-539-4830

<https://www.rileysportsequipment.com/>

Athletica Sport Systems Inc.

554 Parkside Drive

Waterloo, ON N2L 5Z4

Telephone: 519-747-1856

Toll-free: 877-778-5911

<https://www.athletica.com/>

Hockey Canada Novice Half-Ice Games Video: <https://hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/hockey-programs/coaching/novice>