



U11

CANADIAN PLAYER PATHWAY



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SECTION 1: Introduction to U11 Hockey

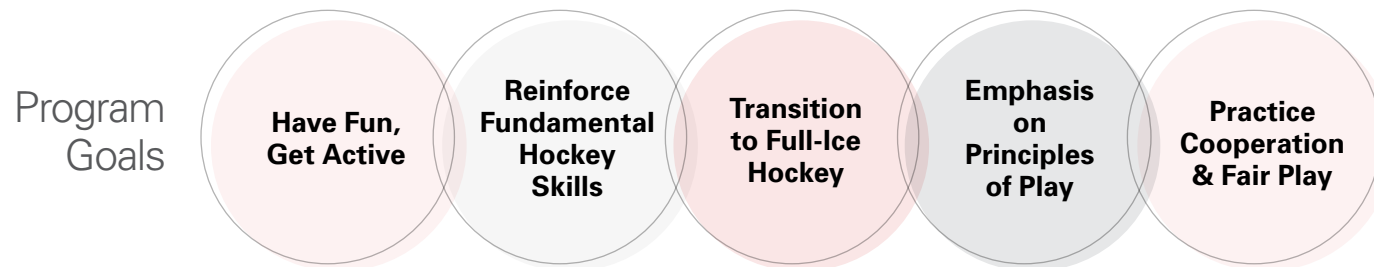


Introduction

Development is at the core of U11 hockey, with the focus on refining skills so players will experience success in practices and games. Looking at how kids learn, and the number of repetitions of specific skills and situations that occur in practice versus a game, practice is where players have a chance to develop the most.

U11 hockey should be delivered through a progressive, learn-to-play teaching curriculum that is age-appropriate and skill-specific for 9-10-year-olds. It is a continuous opportunity for young players to develop and refine fundamental movement skills (skating, turning, acceleration), manipulation skills (shooting, puck control, passing) and overall motor skills (balance, coordination, agility) in a fun and safe environment, promoting skill development through self-confidence.

When players continue on a positive note, they enjoy the game and will go on to have fun playing hockey for many years.



Hockey Canada wants every Canadian youngster to have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from a program designed to meet their specific needs, one that ensures progressive skill development through well-delivered practice sessions and age-appropriate game play in an environment suited to their skill level.



SECTION 2:

Rationale for Programming



Rationale for Programming

Dr. Stephen Norris has consulted with Hockey Canada in the areas of player development and performance programming for a number of years. He was one of the founding members and contributors to the 'Canadian Sport for Life' movement focusing on athlete/participant development. Dr. Norris contributed to Hockey Canada in the design of the **Long-Term Player Development Model** and Player Pathways.

In each area outlined below, rationale has been provided and has been supplemented by Dr. Norris.

Player evaluation/selection/tryouts cannot be scheduled prior to the start of the school year.

- Give local 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 local 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 hockey evaluations starting at the same time as the school year.

The notion of evaluations 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.

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 for the student.

Minimum of four practices and/or skill sessions prior to formal player evaluation/selection/tryouts.

- A player's first experience in the new hockey season should not be a formal evaluation – this gives all players the opportunity to get back on the ice in a 'player-friendly' scenario.
- 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 local hockey associations the opportunity to run their own prep camp instead of members spending money outside the association.

There is a substantial benefit for children to have the opportunity to participate in four ice sessions prior to formal selection or evaluation. Players feel more relaxed and are able to perform at a higher level, compared to being evaluated in their first time back on the ice. By providing these opportunities, players are placed in a situation where stress has been mitigated and they are able to showcase their ability.

Player evaluation/selection/tryouts must be a minimum of three formal sessions. Recommendation is one skills session, one small-area games session and one game.

- Players need a chance to be evaluated – standardization means transparency, fairness and consistency.
- Provide coaches with the foundation for a solid and quantifiable evaluation.

This follows the previous point of providing ALL players with the opportunity to re-engage with hockey. For example, it would be unacceptable for a school in the first week of September to give children an exam 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 evaluations early in the process before anything is taught.

Development time following team selection and prior to the start of the regular season.

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

Professional and/or knowledgeable individuals wishing to provide positive developmental experiences for children or youth should 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.

- 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.

Teams often finish their regular season at the end of January or beginning of February to accommodate a playoff scenario that mimics what professional teams or semi-professional age-group development teams do.

It is important to remember that minor hockey is 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 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 connection.

In an elimination-style playoff structure, teams look for tournaments and exhibition games to keep playing at least until the end of March. 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 associations look at competition structures that keep their participants playing until as late in the season as possible.



SECTION 3: Seasonal Structure



The U11 level is the first to differentiate between recreation and competitive programming. The timelines for each phase are meant to be maximums, but each phase can be shorter based on local logistics. The number of games and practices are also recommendations by Hockey Canada supported by the **Long-Term Player Development Model**.

The Ideal Season

Young players have an opportunity to continue their development while having a positive and fun hockey experience. The ideal season does not conflict with the start of the school year, provides a fair evaluation/selection/tryout process and is structured to maximize development opportunities.

The U11 Player Pathway and corresponding coaching materials provide progressive and incremental skill development. By using the Hockey Canada Skills Manuals on the **Hockey Canada Network** and **Drill Hub**, coaches are provided with the framework for practice sessions that meet the needs of their players. The seasonal goals should correspond with the U11 Skills Matrix (Section 5) that outlines the skills players should be exposed to throughout the season.

1. Preparation/Evaluation Phase
UP TO 2 WEEKS

2. Development Phase
UP TO 4 WEEKS

3. Regular Season Phase
UP TO 22 WEEKS

4. Playoff/Tournament Phase
UP TO 4 WEEKS

Annual Calendar & Seasonal Phases

1. Preparation/Evaluation Phase UP TO 2 WEEKS

- No evaluation/selection/tryouts during the off-season phase (March through August).
- No evaluation/selection/tryouts prior to the first week of school, or during the first week if it 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 evaluation/selection/tryouts commence.
- Minimum of four practices/skill sessions prior to formal evaluation/selection/tryouts starting.
- Minimum of three formal evaluation/selection/tryout sessions.
- Recommendations:
 - One skills session, one small-area games session, one game.
 - Players should be encouraged to play both forward and defence.
 - Players should be selected based on skill, not positional preference.

2. Development Phase UP TO 4 WEEKS

- Ideal practice-to-game ratio is 2:1 – two practices to one game played.
- Focus on skill development:
 - Fundamental movement skills: striding, turning, stopping
 - Manipulation skills: shooting, passing, puck control
 - Motor skills: agility, balance, coordination
- Fun and safe environment to promote self-confidence.

3. Regular Season Phase

UP TO 22 WEEKS

- Recommended maximum of 46 games per season (exhibition, league, playoff/tournament).
- Recommended seasonal breaks:
 - Season should allow for two seasonal breaks (not including Christmas/long weekends).
 - Minimum five days without a scheduled game or mandatory practice.

4. Playoff/Tournament Phase

UP TO 4 WEEKS

- Tournament-style playoffs (no elimination rounds).
- Continue to reinforce skill-development elements in practices.



U11 Seasonal Structure RECREATIONAL

PHASE	Prep/Evaluation Phase & Development Phase	Regular Season Phase	Playoff/Tournament Phase
DURATION	Up to 6 WEEKS prior to the start of the Regular Season phase	Up to 22 WEEKS after the completion of the Development phase	Up to 4 WEEKS after the conclusion of the Regular Season phase
BALANCE	20% OF THE SEASON	70% OF THE SEASON	10% OF THE SEASON
VOLUME	UP TO 6 WEEKS	UP TO 22 WEEKS	UP TO 4 WEEKS
PRACTICES	8 PRACTICE SESSIONS	22 PRACTICE SESSIONS	4 PRACTICE SESSIONS
GAMES	UP TO 4 GAMES	UP TO 16 GAMES	UP TO 12 GAMES
TOURNAMENTS	1 TOURNAMENT	1 TOURNAMENT	1 TOURNAMENT

U11 Seasonal Structure COMPETITIVE

PHASE	Prep/Evaluation Phase & Development Phase	Regular Season Phase	Playoff/Tournament Phase
DURATION	Up to 6 WEEKS prior to the start of the Regular Season phase	Up to 22 WEEKS after the completion of the Development phase	Up to 4 WEEKS after the conclusion of the Regular Season phase
BALANCE	20% OF THE SEASON	70% OF THE SEASON	10% OF THE SEASON
VOLUME	UP TO 6 WEEKS	UP TO 22 WEEKS	UP TO 4 WEEKS
PRACTICES	12 PRACTICE SESSIONS	44 PRACTICE SESSIONS	4 PRACTICE SESSIONS
GAMES	UP TO 6 GAMES	UP TO 24 GAMES	UP TO 16 GAMES
TOURNAMENTS	1 TOURNAMENT	1 TOURNAMENT	2 TOURNAMENTS



SECTION 4:

Requirements & Recommendations



Fair and Equal Ice Time

- All players should have the same opportunity to contribute, regardless of skill or ability. A coach's responsibility is to develop all players. Shortening the bench in an attempt to win games is not permitted. All players and goaltenders should receive fair and as close to equal as possible ice time.

Recommendations

Positional rotation:

- All players play all positions – forward (LW-C-RW)/defence (LD-RD)/goaltender.
- All players get a chance to start the game and play in end-of-game situations.

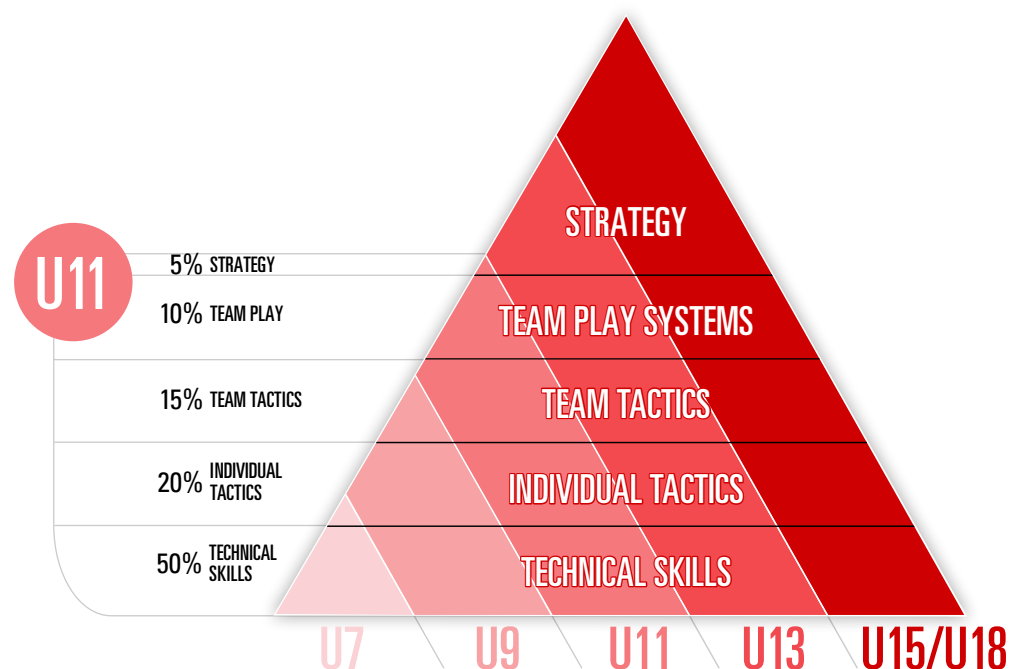
Goaltender rotation:

- Full-time goaltenders allowed.
- Goaltenders rotate for equal amount of playing time throughout the regular season and playoffs.
 - Goaltenders alternate games or split games as close to 50/50 as possible.
 - Each goaltender plays the final game in an equal number of tournaments.
 - The rotation schedule should be done in consultation with the goaltender and parents – share games or alternate playing full games.
- The goaltender not playing the game should be allowed to play as a skater.



Focus on Skill Development

- 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 can be introduced at the end of the U9 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 evaluation/selection/tryouts or after teams are selected.
- Players should rotate through forward and defence in the first half of the season 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.





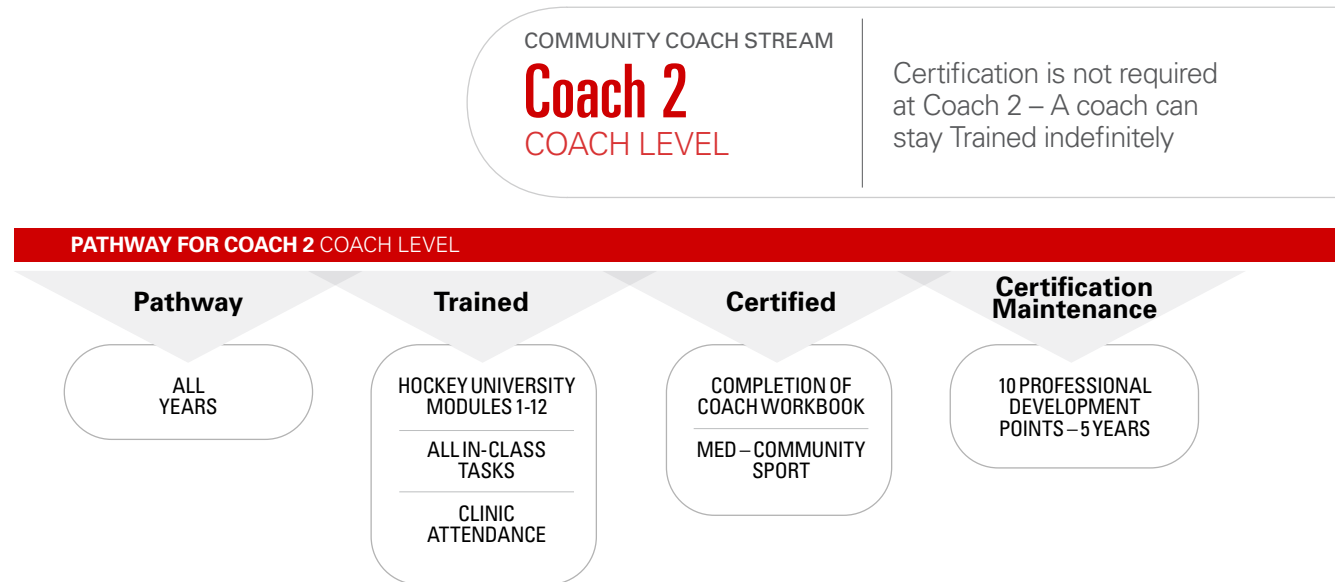
SECTION 5:

Coach Requirements & Resources



Head coaches of U11 teams require:

1. Hockey University
Online Community Coach training
2. NCCP Coach 2
Coach Level
(only Trained status needed, not Certified)
3. Checking Skills
4. Respect in Sport
Activity Leader



Overview

The NCCP Coach 2 – Coach Level clinic through the **National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP)** is a competency-based education and training method of learning for all new and recreational-level coaches, emphasizing basic skills and the importance of players developing confidence, self-esteem and a love for the game.

The clinic introduces player development and will teach coach knowledge, skills and attitudes in:

- Communicating effectively with athletes and parents.
- Supporting the athlete in a team environment.
- Supporting the athlete in the training environment.
- Supporting the athlete in a practice environment.
- Supporting the athlete in a game environment.

Professional Development

NCCP INSTRUCTIONAL CLINICS

Hockey Canada has created a series of instructional clinics in addition to the Coach Stream program. While the coaching clinic is more specific to supporting coaches in the team environment, the instructional clinics are specific to teaching skills in all areas of the game.

Members offer these clinics as a way of supporting and enhancing the ongoing development of coaches in:

- Skating
- Skills
- Developing Defence
- Shooting and Scoring
- Small-Area Games
- Checking Skills
- Goaltending



Resources

Resources are available to support local hockey associations and coaches in the design and delivery of a hockey experience that meets the needs of 9-10-year-old players. Coaches should access both the Hockey Canada Network and Drill Hub to ensure they have up-to-date resources to support the U11 program. A variety of materials can also be downloaded [here](#).

Hockey Canada Network

The **Hockey Canada Network** is an iOS and Android app that contains a wealth of information for coaches and instructors. The entire series of Hockey Canada Skills Manuals and the Skills of Gold instructional videos are available on the Network. It includes 32 lesson plans designed specifically for the U11 program, available to coaches and instructors. While there is a fee for full access, creating an account on the free version of the Network provides access to many U11 resources.

Drill Hub

Drill Hub provides coaches of U11 players with access to all drills at no cost. Coaches can sign up to have free access to Hockey Canada's growing library of drills. Users can create their own practice plans to share electronically with players or assistant coaches.

U11 Skills Matrix

The **Long-Term Player Development Model** places U11 hockey at the Learn to Play stage, with programming focused on fundamental skill development. The U11 skills matrix identifies the skills players must have the opportunity to develop through progressive and meaningful practice sessions.

U11 Skills

LTPD STAGE
LEARN TO PLAY

Balance & Agility	Edge Control	Starting & Stopping	Forward Skating & Striding	Backward Skating	Turning & Crossovers
All skating skills from Timbits U7 and U9	Figure 8's– forward–inside & outside edge	Front v-start	Forward striding	C-cuts left foot/right foot	Glide turns/tight turns
Forward scissor skate	Figure 8's– backward–inside & outside edge	Crossover start	Linear crossovers	Backward scissor skate	C-cuts–around circle–outside foot– forward & backward
Lateral crossovers	Heel to heel (Mohawk)	Backward c-cut start	Acceleration	One crossover/reach	Crossovers– forward & backward
C-cuts toe on puck	One-leg weaving–forward/backward	Outside leg stop	Quick feet	Backward striding	Pivots– backward to forward & forward to backward
		Two-foot parallel stop	Evasive skating		Pivots– open & reverse
		One-leg backward stop			
		Two-leg backward stop			
Stationary Puck Control	Moving Puck Control	Stationary Passing & Receiving	Moving Passing & Receiving	Shooting	Individual Offensive Tactics
Narrow/Wide	Narrow/Wide	Stationary forehand pass	Moving forehand pass	Forehand– wrist shot	Body fakes
Side–front–side	Open ice carry– forehand & backhand	Stationary bankhand pass	Moving bankhand pass	Backhand– sweep shot	Stick fakes
Toe drag–front & side	Weaving with puck	Forehand saucer pass	Pass & follow	Forehand /backhand shots in motion	Dekes
Attack the triangle	Toe drag–front & side		Cross & drop	Forehand– flip shot	Moves in combination
	Attack the triangle			Backhand– flip shot	Net drives
				Tips/deflections	
Individual Defensive Tactics	Team Play				
Angling	Basic positioning–D zone				
Basic 1-on-1	Basic breakouts				
Escape moves	Basic entries				
Puck retrievals					
Gap control					
Tracking					



SECTION 6:

Frequently Asked Questions



Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are local hockey associations permitted to tier U11 teams, or should all teams be balanced?

Teams are permitted to be tiered to provide a grouping of skill that allows for meaningful competition. If there are multiple U11 teams, it is recommended the teams are balanced (ie. if there are two U11A teams in the same association, it is recommended these teams are balanced).

2. Are teams required to reach the maximum number of recommended games or practices?

Teams do not have to play or practice up to the maximum numbers, as outlined in the seasonal structure. Many local hockey associations have different ice allocations and facility availability, so schedules can be developed based on the availability up to the maximum number of recommended games or practices.

3. What should the content of the ice sessions be for the four development sessions prior to evaluation/selection/tryouts?

The sessions should be focused on the fundamental skills of skating, puck-handling, passing and shooting, along with small-area games to prepare players for the evaluation/selection/tryout process. Hockey Canada and its Members have developed four sample ice-session plans for local hockey associations to utilize. The goal is to provide players an opportunity to be on the ice and revisit these skills prior to evaluation/selection/tryouts.

4. What drills should be used for evaluation/selection/tryouts?

The best drills are ones designed to provide evaluators/coaches with a good snapshot of a player's ability so they can be placed on teams with like-skilled players. The on-ice drills should be a combination of skating, puck-handling, small-area games and game play as part of a well-rounded process. Hockey Canada and its Members have developed sample evaluation ice-session plans for local hockey associations to utilize. The goal is to provide players a chance to experience a fair evaluation of their skills, competitive mindset and hockey sense.

5. Are seasonal breaks required?

Seasonal breaks are not mandatory but are recommended as a "good practice" for players to have a chance to re-charge, for coaches to attend professional development sessions and for families to engage in activities and not have to worry about missing scheduled hockey activities.

6. Is it mandatory for players to rotate positions?

It is not mandatory, but it is beneficial for players to play different positions to assist in developing their overall skill and hockey sense. At the U11 level there is no need for a player to only be a right winger or left defence; rotating positions will give all players a chance to experience the game from different positions and ultimately develop well-rounded players.



Canadian Development Model (CDM) Minor Work Group

Hockey Canada gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following individuals:

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