

16/18-and-Under



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At the 16-and-Under and 18-and-Under levels, coaches should focus on the following age-appropriate concepts and skills so that players have a good experience and continue developing as hockey players and teenagers.

FOCUS POINTS

- Fun and Engagement
- Practice Structure
- Age-Appropriate Training
- Skill Development
- Body Contact/Body Checking
- Team Play
- Training
- Learning to Compete

FUN

Players who have reached this level of play should have experienced fun along the way. No one should ever underestimate the value fun has played in the development of these players or will play going forward. These are critical years where the intensity of practices and games will increase, and coaches must find ways to incorporate fun into team practices and activities on a consistent basis. This generation of players has opportunities for activities of all kinds, so if they don't find a satisfactory amount of fun in the practices and games, they may opt to quit.

ENGAGEMENT

Coaches must strive to find the optimal level when determining the targeted skills, concepts and systems that can be taught at this age. When the level is too low, it may lead to boredom, and when the level is too high, it may lead to frustration. Individualizing the targeted level for each player is a mission that, when achieved, can lead to players who are engaged and having fun, and it can therefore maximize their performance. Engagement occurs when the level of play is ideal for each individual player (i.e., not too easy, not too hard). It's important that coaches design practices where the games and drills teach the desired skills and concepts. When players have the opportunity to see and feel success when executing skills and showing that they understand concepts in game-like conditions, then engagement has an opportunity to take place.

PRACTICE STRUCTURE

Practices for players at this age level should be more intense than previous levels while maintaining proper work-to-rest ratios. While skill development is important, executing these skills at higher speeds and in smaller areas with more resistance should be an increased focus. Coaches must aim for proper work-to-rest ratios based on the desired outcomes of the drills performed within a practice. Refer to the Player Activity Chart found on the free Mobile Coach App and at admkids.com under Coaches/Repetition for a form to evaluate the developmental opportunities that occur for players in practice and in games.

AGE-APPROPRIATE TRAINING

Players at this level should learn to compete, learn to train at a higher level, execute skills in traffic at higher speeds and show an ability to understand and execute many concepts and tactics related to the game. The adults involved with youth sports sometimes think these things have been developed earlier in players' careers, when in fact they were simply not ready to do these things at earlier ages. The importance of team-play and related systems increases at this age level. Coaches should teach concepts, tactics and team systems through small games. Players need the opportunity to practice these things in a setting where the game can teach the player and show success and failure. Coaches must remember that making

mistakes is a big part of the development process for players. Coaches should create an environment where making mistakes is acceptable.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Players at the highest level of hockey continue investing countless hours honing the skills required to be effective at that level. It's no different for a 16/18-and-Under player. They too must continue honing the skating, stickhandling, passing, and shooting skills needed to be an effective player. The ability to execute these skills at higher rates of speed, in smaller areas, and under game conditions is important for the continued development of each player. Teaching players to compete and train are essential components of the development process.

BODY CONTACT/BODY CHECKING

Players are now at the age where body checking is allowed in games. Coaches should incorporate drills in practice that teach the skills related to good body contact and body checking. As these are very important skills, these drills should occur in every practice. The drills should focus on balance, stick position, angling, body contact, receiving a body check, delivering a body check, etc. Coaches should also teach players to check with a purpose (that purpose being to make body contact with the puck carrier in an effort to gain possession of the puck). Therefore, when delivering a body check, players should keep the blade of their stick on the ice and maintain stick-on-stick position. Refer to *Checking the Right Way for Youth Hockey* for information and drills related to body contact and body checking.

TEAM CONCEPTS

16/18-and-Under players are ready to grasp more team-play concepts and systems than they have before. Coaches should build on the concepts and systems introduced to these players at previous levels. Coaches should spend more time teaching forechecking concepts, power-plays, penalty kills, and defensive-zone coverages. However, practices should include an equal amount of time devoted to skill improvement and understanding of concepts.

TRAINING

Training is a critical component in the development process for 16/18-and-Under players. Players should find themselves in on-ice and off-ice workouts that stretch their limits. Training workouts should challenge players to break through previously established physical and mental limits. Coaches can and should increase the intensity of workouts, utilizing high work levels with proper rest to follow. It's important to remember that these workouts of increased intensity will challenge the athlete. Coaches will need to coach the athlete through the mental challenges as well as the physical challenges.

LEARNING TO COMPETE

One of the misnomers adults associate with youth sports is related to competing. Adults often throw the word “compete” around for players as young as 8-and-Under. The reality is that, because of physical and emotional development, players are not ready for this emphasis on competing until they are in their mid-teens. 16/18-and-Under players are ready, and now they are participating in practices and games with higher intensity levels (faster and more physical). They must execute skills and make quick decisions in this physical environment while keeping their emotions in check. Even though winning is not the only gauge which determines success, players will find themselves in tight games where they are required to execute the skills, tactics and systems which they have learned. Whether they are able to execute these skills, tactics and systems, and how they deal with success and failure, is part of the process of learning to compete.

PRACTICE FOCUS

Practices should focus on (percentage of time listed after each):

16-and-Under

1. **Individual Skills** (hockey skills and activities) — 50%
2. **Hockey Sense** (teaching of concepts through small area games) — 30%
3. **Systems** (team-play training) — 20%

18-and-Under

1. **Individual Skills** (hockey skills and activities) — 50%

2. **Hockey Sense** (teaching of concepts through small area games) — 25%
3. **Systems** (team-play training) — 25%

While these percentages are approximations, they emphasize that individual skills are the most important part of development at this age and that the majority of practice time should be spent improving them. The percentages also indicate that teaching hockey sense is still as important as teaching systems and team-play training.

SMALL AREA GAMES

Hockey sense is of even greater importance at this age level. Hockey sense includes the ability to understand important age-appropriate hockey concepts and execute tactics related to these concepts. Rather than telling players how to play each situation, small area games provide a great opportunity to let a game teach the desired concept(s). Players learn the desired concept by playing the game within its parameters; it challenges players to find their own solutions, increasing their confidence and retention. Consistent use of these games is important in the development of hockey sense for each player. They should be playing a variety of games and, in each case, figuring the game out on their own. Coaches should not be telling players how to play. The number of players, rules of the game, and size of the game area should be varied with each game. Coaches might also opt to use pucks, balls, or ringette rings to change the dynamic of each game.

Small area games are great teaching tools that also create a fun and competitive environment. Greater emphasis on competition should continue at this age, and small area games provide a great opportunity for players to experience a competitive environment every day in practice. Refer to the *Small Area Competitive Games Handbook* and the *Small Area Competitive Games 2* book for age-appropriate small area games.

OPTIMAL WINDOWS OF TRAINABILITY

In order for players to maximize their ability and reach their potential, it's important for youth coaches to do the right thing with young athletes at the right time. Focusing on these key

components at the appropriate age will give young athletes the best opportunity to achieve their potential as they progress through their teenage years. Researchers have concluded that players in this age classification should spend time developing the following capabilities related to their long-term development:

1. **Speed (for boys and girls)** – Emphasis should continue on increasing speed by improving the stride length and stride frequency through drills requiring high velocity for shorter intervals of time.
2. **Stamina (for boys)** – This is an ideal stage to improve the endurance of each athlete (the ability to sustain prolonged physical or mental effort).
3. **Strength (for boys and girls)** – Following puberty, it's the ideal time to improve the physical strength of an athlete.

The factors affecting long-term development differ slightly for boys and girls at this age level.

PLAYER KNOWLEDGE

Players should know:

1. Rules
 - a. face-offs
 - b. offsides
 - c. icing
 - d. checking from behind
 - e. player conduct
 - f. *related to legal body contact/body checking: checking from behind, contact to the head, elbowing, etc.***
 - g. *required equipment***
2. Common Infractions
 - a. unsportsmanlike conduct
 - b. checking from behind and boarding
 - c. cross-checking, charging and slashing
 - d. head contact, elbowing and high-sticking
 - e. tripping, hooking and kneeing
 - f. interference and holding
 - g. unsportsmanlike conduct, fighting and attempt to injure

3. Penalties
 - a. minor
 - b. major
 - c. misconduct
 - d. penalty shot
 - e. match
 - f. *order that multiple penalties are served***

INDIVIDUAL HOCKEY SKILLS

Players should continue developing and mastering the skills listed at previous levels, while adding these new ones:

1. Skating
 - a. ready position and the ability to find this strong position when engaged in body contact
 - b. edge control
 - c. forward start
 - d. forward stride
 - e. controlled stop: two-foot and one-foot snowplow
 - f. controlled turn
 - g. forward crossover
 - h. backward skating
 - i. backward stop
 - j. ABCs of skating- agility, balance, coordination, and speed drills
 - k. mohawk turns
 - l. one-foot stop
 - m. backward crossover
 - n. lateral skating
 - o. backward cross-under start
 - p. backward two-skate stop
 - q. backward power stop (one skate)
 - r. quickness
 - s. speed
 - t. agility
 - u. power
 - v. change of direction
 - w. balance (use of edges)
 - x. *forward and backward pivots***
 - y. *backward skating with minimal cross-overs***

2. Puck Control
 - a. lateral (side-to-side) stickhandling
 - b. front-to-back stickhandling
 - c. diagonal stickhandling
 - d. attacking the triangle
 - e. puck protection
 - f. change of pace
 - g. toe drag
 - h. give and take
 - i. accelerating with the puck (one-hand carry)
 - j. change of direction
 - k. backward puck control
 - l. fakes and deception while stickhandling
 - m. puck off the boards
 - n. fake shot
 - o. stop and go
 - p. spin around
 - q. *stickhandling in tight areas***
 - r. *while skating backward, stickhandle the puck on forehand side of body***
3. Passing and Receiving
 - a. forehand pass
 - b. backhand pass
 - c. receiving a pass properly with the stick
 - d. saucer pass (forehand and backhand)
 - e. receiving a pass properly with the skate
 - f. indirect pass
 - g. receiving a pass properly with the hand
 - h. surround the puck
 - i. one-touch passes
 - j. area passes
 - k. crisp passes
4. Shooting
 - a. wrist shot
 - b. backhand
 - c. flip shot
 - d. screen shot
 - e. deflection
 - f. off rebound
 - g. snap shot

- h. slap shot
 - i. fake shots
 - j. one-timers
 - k. stick position in scoring areas
 - l. shots in close (pull the puck in and get it up)
 - m. *adjust angle of shot just prior to shooting***
5. Body Contact
- a. stick on puck
 - b. stick lift
 - c. poke check
 - d. gap control concept
 - e. body positioning and angling
 - f. stick press
 - g. angling
 - h. delivering body contact
 - i. receiving body contact (contact confidence)
 - j. shoulder check
 - k. receiving a body check
 - l. *delivering a body check***
 - m. *hip check***
 - n. *containing/stalling***
6. Goaltending
- Goaltenders should continue to perform skills learned at previous age-levels and become faster, stronger and quieter.***
- a. positioning
 - i. proper stance
 - ii. angling
 - b. movement
 - i. forward
 - ii. backward
 - iii. lateral
 - c. save technique
 - i. stick
 - ii. gloves
 - iii. body and pads
 - iv. butterfly
 - v. sliding butterfly
 - d. recovery

- e. puck handling
 - i. stopping the puck behind net
 - ii. passing the puck
 - a. forehand
 - b. backhand
 - iii. clearing the puck
 - a. forehand
 - b. backhand
- f. puck retention
 - i. cradling
 - ii. rebound control
- g. game situations
 - i. screen shots
 - ii. walkouts
 - iii. wraparounds
 - iv. breakaways
 - v. line rushes (odd and even)
 - vi. face-offs in the defensive zone
 - vii. communication with teammates

TEAM PLAY

Players must learn and understand:

1. Offensive Concepts
 - a. 2-on-1 situations
 - b. 1-on-1 situations
 - c. triangle offense
 - d. team play in each zone
 - e. face-offs
 - f. zone entry
 - g. power-play concepts
 - h. offensive principles: pressure, transition, support
 - i. cycling
 - j. puck control**
 - k. dump-ins**
 - l. attacking the offensive zone**
 - m. play away from the puck**
2. Defensive Concepts
 - a. gap control
 - b. stick on puck
 - c. back-checking
 - d. body position: man-you-net

- e. basic defensive zone coverage
- f. defending the middle of the ice
- g. 1-on-1 and even-numbered situations
- h. 2-on-1 and odd-numbered situations
- i. fore-checking
- j. man-short concepts
- k. shot blocking
- l. defensive principles: pressure, transition, support
- m. defensive play in each zone
- n. boxing out and fronting an opponent
- o. *stall/contain***

NUTRITION

Players should learn:

1. **Proper Hydration** – Players should learn the importance of proper hydration before, during, and after all games and practices.
2. **Good Eating Habits** – Players should be encouraged to eat good meals and refrain from eating candy and other foods that lack nutritional value.
3. **Recovery Drink** – While there are many recovery drinks on the market, players should be encouraged to drink chocolate milk following any practice or game session.
4. **Eating and Energy** – Players should know the importance of eating healthy foods that are high in carbohydrates in order to gain long-term energy.

FITNESS AND TRAINING

Players should continue performing exercises learned at previous age levels, but should also focus on the following:

1. Speed workouts
2. Strength workouts
3. Range-of-motion exercises
4. Aerobic and anaerobic workouts
5. Off-ice skill development
 - a. slide board
 - b. stickhandling with various types of balls
 - c. shooting range

INJURY PREVENTION

Players should continue to learn more about:

- the Heads Up Hockey Program.
- the importance of hydration.
- safety precautions for practice.
- the importance of warming up with a dynamic warm-up and cooling down with static stretching.
- the RICE concept (Rest–Ice–Compression–Elevation)

SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

Players should learn:

- to develop a pre-game routine.
- relaxation exercises.
- to focus on things that can be controlled.
- to give maximum effort at all times.
- to play with poise and confidence.
- to be in control of emotions at all times.
- basic visualization skills.
- the benefits of positive self-talk. Positive comments can reduce stress, enhance self-image and increase fun at practices and games.
- to set goals, strive to reach those goals, and periodically evaluate progress towards those goals.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND LIFE SKILLS

Players must learn:

- the importance of honesty and integrity in and away from the arena.
- to accept responsibility for their actions and athletic performance.
- coping strategies to deal with peer pressure and other adversity.
- to balance family, school, sports, social activities, etc.
- to develop a sense of team commitment.
- about adversity and begin developing strategies to deal with it.

PARENT DEVELOPMENT

Refer to *An American Hockey Parent Handbook* found on the USA Hockey website.

NOTES

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