

14-and-Under



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At the 14-and-Under level, coaches should focus on the following age-appropriate concepts and skills so that players have a good experience and develop as hockey players and young teenagers.

FOCUS POINTS

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

FUN

These young athletes have many recreational and free-time options. It's essential that 14-and-Under players still enjoy hockey practices and games in order to keep them involved in the sport and continuing their development. These early teenage years can provide many challenges for coaches and players alike. It's imperative that coaches are aware of these physical and emotional challenges, but that they also realize there is an excellent opportunity for development at this age. With the increased opportunities for players of this age, fun must remain at the forefront.

ENGAGEMENT

When coaches are able to create the optimal challenge level, where each player is able to demonstrate success while still having an appropriate level of difficulty, engagement can and will occur for each player. Coaches who incorporate fun into

practices and also find the optimal challenge level for each player are creating the ideal environment for long-term development. The challenge for coaches is that this optimal level will vary from player to player. Coaches will have to be very creative when trying to individualize practices so that the optimal skill level can be targeted for each player. When engagement occurs, players are able to see their own improvement and maximize their development as they are working at the appropriate level.

PRACTICE ACTIVITY AND STRUCTURE

Coaches designing practices should aim for an appropriate work-to-rest ratio for players of this age. This ratio should be used when the intensity of a drill allows for players to go hard for short periods of time. Players of this age are now able to utilize their anaerobic energy system. Coaches should also consider using practices with high activity levels as they continue to hone the skills of these players. Coaches must recognize the need for an adequate work-to-rest ratio in many practices, but must also be able to adapt if the practice requires an especially high activity level. 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

As stated at previous levels, coaches must carefully determine the skills, concepts, and team systems on which to focus. The proper ratio of these three components is critical. Teams at this level should increase the amount of time they spend focused on team play, however the majority of time in practices should still be spent on improving individual skills and understanding concepts.

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.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

As players get older, the number of skills, concepts, and systems to be taught throughout a season increases. They are now at an age where the time spent teaching team-related systems will increase. However coaches are reminded that the majority of practice time should be spent improving the individual skills and understanding level of age-appropriate concepts.

TEAM PLAY

The amount of time spent working on team-related concepts and systems should increase from previous age classifications. Players should learn different forecheck systems, defensive-zone coverages, power-plays, etc. More importantly, in each case, players should be taught the concepts within each of those systems. Why is the player being asked to do what he or she is doing within the system? What is the opponent being forced to do? Players should be taught the answers to these questions. This will allow them to read and react appropriately to situations they encounter in games. Understanding and applying a concept, as opposed to just repeating an action, is crucial in the improvement of a player.

PRACTICE FOCUS

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

1. **Individual Skills** (hockey skills and activities) — 50%
2. **Hockey Sense** (teaching of concepts through small area games) — 35%
3. **Systems** (team play training) — 15%

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 begin 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)** – This is an ideal time to increase speed by improving the stride length and stride frequency through drills requiring high velocity for shorter intervals of time.
2. **Stamina (for boys and girls)** – This is an optimal development stage to improve the endurance of each

athlete (ability to sustain prolonged physical or mental effort).

3. **Strength (for girls)** – Following puberty, it is the ideal time to improve the 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. body contact
 - c. offsides
 - d. icing
 - e. checking from behind
 - f. *player conduct***
2. Common Infractions
 - a. unsportsmanlike conduct
 - b. body checking, 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

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)**
- 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**
- 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)***
- 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***
- 6. Goaltending
 - 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***
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. forechecking
- 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

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 be introduced to the importance of eating healthy foods that are high in carbohydrates in order to gain long-term energy.

FITNESS AND TRAINING

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

1. Speed workouts
2. Strength workouts using body weight
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 can 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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