

Welcome to PHA: A First-Time Parent's Guide

1. The Essential Gear Checklist

Inline hockey requires specialized equipment. Unlike ice hockey, the focus is on lightweight, breathable gear since you aren't on a refrigerated surface.

- **Helmet with Full Cage:** Mandatory for all youth players to protect against high sticks and pucks.
- **Inline Hockey Skates:** These use wheels instead of blades. Ensure the wheels are "indoor" or "outdoor" rated depending on your rink's surface.
- **Shin Guards & Elbow Pads:** Essential for protecting joints during falls or collisions.
- **Inline Girdle & Hockey Pants:** A girdle provides hip and tailbone protection, while specialized inline pants are worn over the pads to prevent "rink rash" from the floor.
- **Gloves:** Provide protection for hands and wrists while maintaining a grip on the stick.
- **Hockey Stick:** For beginners, a stick should reach between the chin and nose while the player is in skates.
- **Mouthguard & Protective Cup:** Both are highly recommended (and often mandatory) for player safety.

2. Basic Rules You Should Know

Inline hockey has a few key differences from the NHL games you might see on TV:

- **4-on-4 Play:** Most games are played with 4 skaters and 1 goalie per side, creating more open space for skill development.
- **No Offsides or Icing:** In many amateur inline leagues, there are no offside or icing rules, which keeps the game fast-paced and continuous.
- **No Body Checking:** Most youth inline leagues are strictly "no-check" to focus on puck handling and skating skills.
- **Two Halves:** Instead of three periods, many inline games consist of two 20-25 minute halves.

3. Tips for a Smooth First Season

- **Arrive Early:** Aim to be at the rink **20-30 minutes** before your scheduled time. Getting a child into full gear for the first time takes longer than you think.
- **Label Everything:** Most kids have identical-looking gear. Use a permanent marker to label skates, gloves, and sticks.
- **Hydration is Key:** Because inline rinks can get warm, ensure your player has a full water bottle for every practice and game.
- **Air Out the Gear:** After every use, take the gear out of the bag to dry. This prevents bacteria growth and that "hockey smell".

4. Why Inline Hockey?

- **Skill Development:** The extra space and focus on puck possession in inline hockey helps players develop better vision and creativity.
- **Affordability:** Inline hockey typically has lower equipment costs and registration fees compared to ice hockey.
- **Transferable Skills:** Skating mechanics in inline hockey translate directly to improved balance and edge work on the ice.

