

Frequently Asked Questions

When should my child start?

While the Learn to Skate and Learn to Play programs are open to children of all ages, they are targeted for children 4-12 years old and there are advantages to starting your child early. Four and five year olds take to skating very easily, and will have plenty of time to practice their skating and hockey skills before moving on to travel hockey.

Are girls welcome?

Yes! Many girls enjoy youth hockey and the number is increasing every year. Almost all girls start out in a youth hockey organization like SWYHA, with boys and girls learning and playing together. As they get older, some girls choose to play for a girls-only team, but many female hockey players got their start playing with the boys at co-ed organizations.

How much does it cost?

Hockey has a reputation as a sport that costs a lot of money to play. However, the cost of getting started is very reasonable with starter equipment packages available for a very modest cost (or free if you sign up for the Junior Rangers program). The cost of Learn to Skate is FREE, and both SWYHA and the Junior Rangers provide tremendous value for getting your child started. Once your child moves on to travel hockey, the total cost increases, but remember that your player could be on the ice four to five times a week between practices and games for about six months, so the per-hour cost ends up being lower than for many other youth sports.

Will I have to be at the rink at 5 AM?

No. If you believe TV commercials, you might think all hockey practices take place at 5 AM. In reality, practices during the week are in the evenings, and games are at reasonable hours on the weekends.

What happens at the end of the Learn-to-Skate (LTS) session?

If your skater missed the sign-up period for the Junior Rangers, your child can either re-roll into our Free Learn-to-Skate classes and/or sign up for our Winter Junior Rangers Learn-to-Play program that starts in December.

Does my child need to have participated in the Junior Rangers Learn-to-Play in order to play in the Junior Rangers Rookie League?

No! The Junior Rangers is a great way to introduce your young player to the game of hockey. The focus of the Jr Rangers is basic introduction on skill development where Rookie League is a deeper focus on skills and letting the kids play actual games. Many families take advantage of the Junior Rangers for a couple of reasons:

- It is a great and cost-effective way to get all the equipment needed for Learn to Skate and Rookie League.
- Focus is on basic skill development through station-based practices.
- It is a bridge for players and families to try ice hockey for before committing to a full season of travel hockey.
- Kids love the fact that they are getting equipment with the New York Rangers logo on them.

Is hockey dangerous?

After watching pro hockey games, you may worry that your child might get hurt playing the sport. While no youth sport is completely free of dangers, serious injuries are very rare in youth hockey. All players wear protective equipment including a helmet whenever they are on the ice, and physical contact (checking) is not allowed until the Bantam level (13 and 14 years old). Coaches and referees take safety very seriously.

What other equipment will my child need to participate?

Besides the basics (skates, helmet and gloves) your child uses for Learn-to-Skate, s/he will also need pants, hockey socks, shoulder pads, elbow pads, knee/shin pads, supporter/cup, neck protector and a hockey stick. All necessary equipment required to play hockey is available in the pro shop at the South Windsor Arena.

How much time do I have before I have to make my decision?

If you are worried about whether your child is ready to take that next step, you can always ask a coach. But in our experience, every child who completes Learn-to-Skate is ready for Learn-to-Play. Learn-to-Play is really just a continuation of Learn-to-Skate with the addition of sticks and pucks, and more time on the ice skating which is the number one thing every child needs to improve.

Where and how should I dress my child in his/her hockey gear?

The players should put on their hockey gear, with your assistance, in one of the locker rooms with their teammates. Even though it is warmer, the Lobby should not be used because too many people walk through the area and it becomes too congested and unsafe for the kids. While the locker rooms can be crowded, it is good for the young hockey players to get used to the process. Plus, they have a

chance to enjoy socializing with each other. Putting on the hockey gear can be confusing at first. Parents who are new to hockey should ask one of the coaches, usually wearing a coach jacket, any questions about the gear. Pure Hockey has a great video you can watch here:

[How to dress your hockey player](#)

How long before practice starts should we arrive at the ice rink to get ready?

Bear in mind that ice time is very valuable, so we want all of the skaters on the ice by the time the practice is scheduled to start. We also divide the kids into smaller manageable groups, so it helps to have them all present for this process. Please help the coaches and other skaters by being on-time.

You should arrive at the rink at least 20 minutes before the scheduled start time so that your skater is ready to go. If you need more than 20 minutes for your child to be ready with equipment and skates, that is totally okay and you should arrive even earlier. Generally, we suggest 20-30 minutes ahead of time.

How do I find out how my child is doing?

Coaches and Assistant Coaches are always available after practice if you have specific questions about your child. They want your child to have fun and learn hockey. Feel free to ask questions.

Who is the best person for information?

Your best source of assistance will be the Head Coach or Team Representative. Most of your emails will come from these individuals. They will be around at most practices to provide information and help address any issues or concerns.

What else do I need to know?

After a Learn-to-Skate or Learn-to-Play session, the best thing is some hot chocolate with your little skater as well as lots of smiles and encouragement.