

**About the U15 Pathway**

Development is at the core of U15 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.

U15 hockey should be delivered through a progressive, learn-to-play teaching curriculum that is age-appropriate and skill-specific for 13-14-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) and checking skills (stick checks, angling, body contact) 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.

**Player Evaluation/Selection**

- No player evaluation/selection/tryouts during the off-season phase (March through August).
- No player 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 two skates/ practices (recreational) or four skates/practices (competitive) starting the week following Labour Day before player evaluation/selection/ tryouts commence.
  - In situations where athletes are required to register for school or require billeting, the tryout/evaluation process as outlined above would not apply.
  - In situations where fall tryouts/evaluations are not possible, an initial spring ID/tryout camp may be held, providing roster spots are left open with final roster to be determined in September.
- Must offer two skates/practices (recreational) or four skates/practices (competitive) prior to evaluation/selection/tryouts.
- Must have a minimum of three evaluation/selection/tryout sessions.
  - Where teams are compiled for balanced rosters, formal tryouts are not required.

**Development Phase**

- Must be a period of development time following player evaluation/ selection/tryouts. (Recommend minimum of 10 – 14 days from the time a team is selected until the regular season starts.)

**Playoffs**

- Playoffs in U15 hockey must be tournament/short-term competition style versus elimination rounds.

- If tournament-style playoffs cannot be accommodated, an alternative structure should be used that minimizes elimination time between initial elimination and declaring a champion. Teams must participate in regular season play until at least March 1

### **Seasonal Structure**

- Preparation/Evaluation Phase (Up to 4 weeks)
  - Prep Phase is an opportunity to get back on the ice and get prepared prior to tryouts so the first session is not a formal evaluation.
  - Evaluating players in terms of skills, small-area game play and a formal game allows coaches to evaluate the different aspects player capabilities. This structure helps in providing players a better chance to show what they can do.
- 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.
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- Regular Season Phase (Up to 24 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.
- Playoff/Tournament Phase (Up to 4 Weeks)
  - Playoffs in U15 hockey must be tournament/short-term competition-style versus elimination rounds.
  - If tournament-style playoffs cannot be accommodated, an alternative structure should be used that minimizes time between initial elimination and declaring a champion. Teams must participate in regular season play until at least March 1.

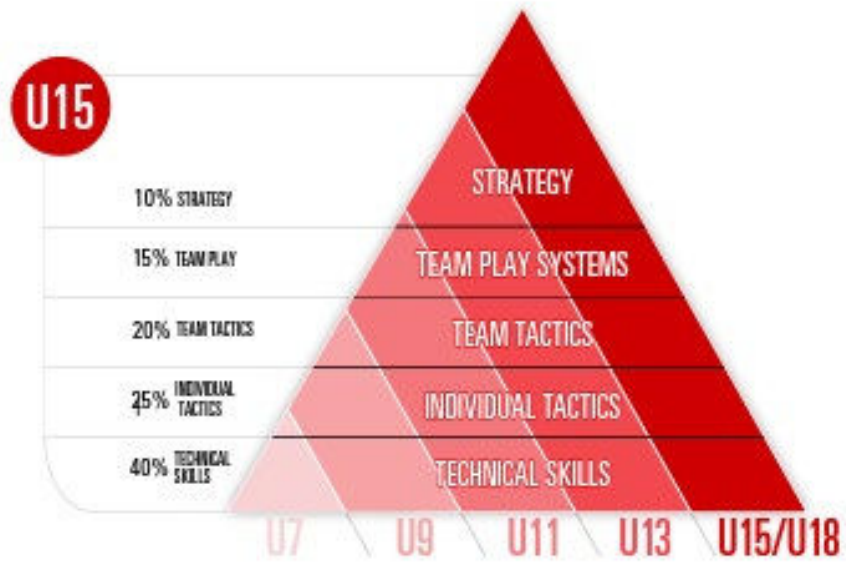
### **Fair and Equal Ice Time**

- Fair and equal ice time is designed to ensure that all players get the same opportunity to contribute to the outcome of games, regardless of skill or ability. A coach's responsibility is to develop all players to contribute. Shortening of 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:
  - All players play all positions – forward (LW-C-RW)/defence (LD-RD).
  - All players get a chance to start the game and play in end-of-game situations.
  - 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.

### **Focus on Skill Development**

- Small-area games in practice / station-based practices / skill focused drills.
- Only 20% of practice time should be spent on team play and strategy/systems with 80% of practice time spent on skills and tactics.
- Basic team play concepts such as defensive-zone positioning, forechecks, special teams, 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.
- Strategy:
  - The selection of team play systems in order to impose upon the opposition, the style of play and tactics which will build on the strengths of the coach and team and neutralize those of the opponent while at the same time taking advantage of the opponent's weaknesses.
  - For example: when opponent's defensive players have weak puck-handling skills, the strategy might be to shoot the puck in and use a 2-1-2 aggressive forechecking system.
- Team Play System:
  - A pattern of play in which the movement of all players is integrated in a coordinated fashion in order to accomplish an offensive or defensive objective (e.g. 2-1-2 forechecking system).
- Team Tactic:
  - A collective action of two or more players using technical skills and / or individual tactics in order to create an advantage or take away the advantage of an opponent (e.g. 3 vs 2).
- Individual Tactic
  - Action by one player using one or a combination of technical skills in order to create an advantage or to take away the advantage of an opponent. A tactic may be classified as offensive or defensive (e.g. 1-on-1 offensive fake and driving to the net).
- Technical Skills
  - The fundamental skills that are required to play the game (e.g. skating, shooting, passing and checking).



Approved by Board of Directors: June 10, 2023  
 New Policy  
 Reviewed: Annually