



# Practice Manual Introduction





# *LEARN TO PLAY PROGRAM*

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# *LEARN TO PLAY PROGRAM*

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## Foreword

by René Fasel, IIHF President

The International Ice Hockey Federation is pleased to welcome you to the Learn to Play Program. Since its inception in 2000 the Learn to Play Program has quickly become a popular and successful program in many nations around the world for introducing beginner players to the joys of ice hockey.

The goal of this program is to teach children, primarily between the ages of 6 and 9 years old, the basic ice hockey skills by creating a fun and enjoyable environment for them to learn.

The Learn to Play Program is also aimed at the education of program instructors and coaches who will be important in the successful implementation of the program around the world.

The IIHF is pleased to provide this program for the worldwide development of ice hockey. We trust that member National Associations will use the program to introduce entry-level players into our sport and teach them these skills that can last a lifetime.

On behalf of the International Ice Hockey Federation, I would like to extend our appreciation to the many volunteers who offered their time and energy to prepare this educational resource for our youngest athletes and their coaches.

Coaches, have fun and enjoy the experience of teaching the children that will be the future of ice hockey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RF', is positioned below the word 'Sincerely,'.

René Fasel  
IIHF President



# LEARN TO PLAY PROGRAM

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## Introduction

The main objective of the IIHF Learn to Play Program is to give 6 to 9 year old boys and girls the ultimate hockey experience. Hockey at this level should be based on having fun, participation by all, and being taught basic hockey skills. This program is based on these ideals.

The Practice Manuals is comprised of four levels; A, B, C and D. The Practice Manuals are for coaches that have completed the Introduction to Coaching Level of the IIHF Coaching Program where they receive instruction in Leadership, Teaching Skills, Practice Organisation and practical on-ice instruction. The coaches receive an Introduction to Coaching Manual at this seminar which they can then use as a reference to help implement the Practice Manuals.

Each of the four levels contain 20 suggested practice plans to teach beginning hockey players the basic skills in an organised and progression. The first 15 practices in each level are very detailed and the five remaining practices are in outline form so that the coach can further develop their practice planning technique and organisational skills.

The IIHF Learn to Play Program is based on a model of practicing and playing cross-ice. “Why cross-ice”, you may ask, “I want my child playing on the big ice surface like the adults do”. That is the point, children are not adults, they learn differently than adults, and they see the world differently than adults do. This cross-ice practicing and playing model has been used in many of the leading hockey nations in the world for a number of years and has stood the test of time. It has shown that children who begin their hockey training in this environment have an outstanding hockey experience. (See the Advantages of Cross-Ice Practicing and Playing on page 9.)

Playing Rules for Children Under 10 Years Old, which have also been tested and developed over time in many countries around the world, are included on page 11. These rules enable the children to develop hockey skills in an environment that fosters fun, learning, participation by all, and mental and physical development.

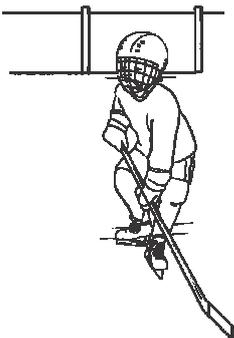
## Practice Manual Format

The four Levels of the practice manual, A, B, C, and D, are formatted in a similar style. The components are laid out in a progressive order to help the LTP coach prepare for and operate an efficient practice. The four components of a lesson are:

1. Specific Objectives
2. Key Instructional Points
3. Teaching Tools Needed
4. Practice Plan

The Practice Plans are intended as worksheets for the LTP coach to write on while preparing the practice. Once the practice is prepared the LTP coach should put the Practice Plan in a plastic cover, take it onto the ice and hang it on the boards for quick reference during the practice.

In the practices you will find drawings, silhouettes of these drawings and ice diagrams which illustrate and explain the desired skills and drills which are covered in the test. When a skill or technique illustration appears in the manual for the first time it is in the form of a line drawing.



When the same drawing is used again it will be in silhouette form which indicates that if you go back earlier in the manual you will find either teaching points or drills using this same technique.



On the last page of each section is a Skills Checklist to help the coach to determine if the players have successfully carry out the skills in that Level and ready to advance move on to next.

Descriptions of the components of a typical practice plan are illustrated on the following pages.

### Plan Identification

A = Level A  
1 = Practice #1

## LESSON A-1

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Develop and improve player's balance and agility.
2. Introduce how to get up.
3. Introduce proper stance.

### KEY INSTRUCTIONAL POINTS

#### 1. Balance

Balance is a basic skill required for the development of all hockey skills. A player who has developed balance can puckhandle, pass, and shoot much easier.

#### 2. Getting up from ice.



a. Always come to the knees.

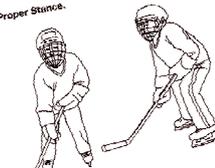


b. Don't place hands on the ice. Keep both hands on the stick.



c. Slide one leg forward so that the blades of your skate is on the ice and follow with the other.

#### 3. Proper Stance.



- a. Skates parallel and shoulder width apart.
- b. Point toes straight ahead.
- c. Bend knees until they are in line with toes of the skates.
- d. Body leaning slightly forward.
- e. Head up.
- f. Two hands on stick; stick close to ice.

### TEACHING TOOLS NEEDED

1. Tennis balls
2. Cross-ice rink boards

### Specific Objectives

- New skills that are to be taught in this lesson are **introduced** here!
- Skills that are being repeated will be **reviewed** in the objectives.
- In some lessons, the objective will be to **refine** certain skills.

### Key Instructional Points

- Provide the Leader with Key Points for giving clear teaching instructions.
- Take your Key Points from here and write them onto your lesson plan.
- If needed, take this page onto the ice for support.

### Teaching Tools Needed

- These are the teaching tools that the Leader will need to prepare for this lesson.
- Remember, the children appreciate when the Leader is prepared.
- Add your own teaching tools to the list.

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## Key Points

- Add your own Key Instructional Points or notes here:
  - bend knees
  - head up
  - keep it fun
  - good communication

## Teaching Tools

- Use the teaching tools which are listed and enhance with your own ideas.

## Organisational Information

- Add your specific information here.

## Skill

- The skill or activity that will be used will be illustrated here.

## Filled-In Illustration

- This illustration, which is filled-in, indicates that this skill or technique has been used earlier in the manual.

## Description

- A detailed description of the skill or activity that will be used is given here to help the Leader in giving instructions to the children.

**LESSON PLAN A-1**

LEADER: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TEAM: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

KEY POINTS

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TEACHING TOOLS

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

SKILL	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Free Skate and Warm-up	1. Clockwise and counterclockwise directions. 2. Varyed speeds. Warm-up: Perform agility drills (p. A-2) a. Knees high b. Sit low c. Reach high d. Touch toes	10 minutes 
Basic Stance (introduce)  p. A-4	1. Leader to demonstrate and go over key points. 2. Have players go into basic stance. 3. Check for balance. a. Have players stand on left skate only. b. Have players stand on right foot only. c. Have players turn up 5-10 cm off ice. Keep knees bent when standing. d. Rock forward onto the toes and backwards onto the heels and try to feel where the best balance point is. NOTE: Repeat each several times.	10 minutes 
Agility (introduce)  p. A-4	1. Leader to demonstrate the proper technique of getting up. 2. Have players fall to knees and get up into basic stance. 3. Have players lie on stomachs. Two hands on the floor, elbows on ice, holding stick level. Push to kneeling position by using elbows, and then stand up in basic stance.	5 minutes 
Balance (introduce)  p. A-2	1. Walk across ice. Lift knees to touch stick held waist-high. Repeat several times.	5 minutes 
Fun Time  p. A-5	1. Give every player a tennis ball. 2. Individual players bounce the ball and catch it. 3. Partners (3-4 meters apart) roll ball to your partner. Player bends over, picks it up and returns to basic stance. 4. Partners kick ball with side of skate (inside of blade) to partner.	10 minutes 

**Illustration**

- This illustration, with no fill-in, indicates that this is the first time that this skill or technique is used in the manual.

**Time**

- Recommended times for each activity are given here.
- Adjust the time according to your situational needs.

## LESSON PLAN A-1

SKILL	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Balance and Agility (introduce)	1. The players must follow the leader who moves slowly around the area. Leader must move slowly and change directions frequently.	5 minutes
Balance and Agility (introduce)	1. Starting from stretchers, the players cross and try to walk on the toes of their skates. Players must stand straight.	5 minutes
Game Time	1. British Bulldog Players stand in line along boards. One player stands in the middle of the rink. At leader's signal, players must cross to the other side. The player in the middle must try to tag them. Players who are touched remain in the center to help. Winner is the last player touched.	10 minutes

**LESSON SUMMARY**

Successes: \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Improvement: \_\_\_\_\_



A-8

**Summary**

- After practice, this section is to be completed by the Leader.
- What successes did we have today?
- In which areas do we need more improvement?
- What needs to be reviewed or refined?

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## Outline of Skills

Listed in the tables below are the skills covered in the IIHF Learn to Play Practice Manuals.

### Level A

1	Balance/Agility	16	V-stop
2	How to get up	17	Puckhandling stance
3	Proper stance puckhandling	18	Stationary
4	T-push	19	Skating with puck
5	Gliding on 2-skates	20	Open ice carry
6	Gliding on 1-skate	21	Starting with puck
7	Scooting	22	Weaving with puck
8	Glide turns	23	Forehand sweep pass
9	Stops One/Eleven o'clock	24	Receiving pass fore-hand
10	Moving sideways hand	25	Backhand sweep pass
11	Striding	26	Receiving pass back
12	Backward stance	27	Skating and passing
13	Walking backwards	28	Forehand sweep shot
14	Gliding backwards	29	Backhand sweep shot
15	C-cut	30	Skating and shooting

### Level B

1	Stance	21	Backward gliding I-skate
2	Gliding 2-skates	22	Backward 1-foot stop and T-push
3	Gliding 1-skate	23	Backward push & glide(backward striding)
4	Scooting	24	Pivot, backwards to forward
5	Scooting on circles	25	Pivot, forward to backwards
6	Glide turns	26	Tight turns
7	Stopping (11 & 1 o'clock)	27	Open ice carry
8	Sideways movement	28	Starting with puck
9	Push and glide(forward striding)	29	Weaving with puck
10	Front V-start	30	Use of feet to control puck
11	Edge control	31	Puckhandling combinations
12	Puck handling stance	32	Stopping with puck
13	Stationary puckhandling	33	Stationary passing (forehand/backhand)
14	Two-foot stop	34	Skating and passing
15	Crossover pumping	35	Lead pass to moving target
16	Skating with puck	36	Bank pass to partner
17	Backward stance	37	Forehand sweep shot
18	C-cut	38	Backhand sweep shot
19	V-stop	39	Skating and shooting
20	Reversing direction and T-push	40	Use of wrists in shooting

### Level C

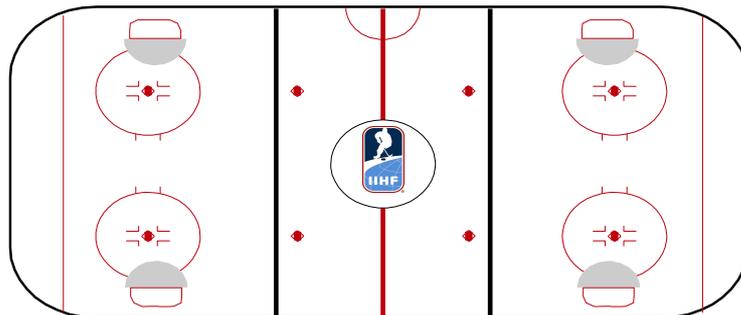
1	Stance	23	Weaving with puck
2	Gliding 2-skates	24	Backward 1-foot stop and T-push
3	Gliding 1-skate	25	Open ice carry
4	T-push	26	Forehand sweep shot
5	Edge control	27	Reversing direction (2-foot stop & T-push)
6	push and glide (forward striding)	28	Backhand sweep shot
7	Two-foot stop	29	Stopping with puck
8	Scooting	30	One-foot stop (front foot)
9	Puckhandling stance	31	Pivot forward -backwards
10	Stationary puckhandling	32	Forehand pass/receive
11	Front start	33	Pivot backwards -forward
12	Backward skating stance	34	Backhand pass/receive
13	Backward gliding -2 skates	35	Crossover front start
14	Backward gliding 1-skate	36	Lateral crossovers
15	Use feet in puckhandling	37	Pass to moving target
16	C-cuts	38	Bank pass
17	V-stop	39	Backward crossover start
18	Glide turns	40	Skating and shooting
19	Crossovers	41	Flip pass
20	Backward push and glide	42	Skating and passing
21	Tight turns	43	Flip shot
22	Skating with puck	44	Skating Fake

### Level D

1	Stance	24	Moving to space
2	Front V-start	25	Forward crossover start
3	Gliding t-skate	26	Stationary sweep shot (forehand & backhand)
4	Puckhandling stance	27	Front foot stop
5	Stationary puckhandling	28	Lateral movement
6	Push and glide (forward striding)	29	Pair passing
7	Two-foot stop	30	Backward crossover start
8	Stationary pass/receive	31	Bank pass
9	Edge control	32	Skating and shooting
10	Use of feet in puckhandling	33	Skating and passing
11	Tight turns	34	One-foot stop outside edge
12	Crossover turns	35	Stationary wrist shot
13	Backward stance	36	Pass receiving in skates
14	C-cuts	37	Two-foot stop and crossover
15	Skating with puck	38	Flip pass
16	V-stop	39	Faking
17	Skating and passing	40	Reverse pivots
18	Stopping with puck	41	2-foot parallel backward stop
19	Pivots (both)	42	Flip shot
20	Backward 1-foot stop	43	Moving to open space
21	Weaving with puck	44	Backward lateral crossovers
22	Open ice carry	45	Backhand Flip shot
23	Backward push and glide	46	Receive, skate shoot

## Advantages of Cross-Ice Practicing and Playing

The IIHF Learn to Play Program is based on a model of practicing and playing hockey across the width of the ice surface, instead of along the full length of the ice surface. This cross-ice practicing and playing model has been used in many of the leading hockey nations in the world for a number of years and has stood the test of time. It has been shown that children who begin their ice hockey training in this environment have an outstanding hockey experience.



Parents may ask the question “Why should my child play cross-ice, what will they learn?” and say “I want my child playing on full-ice like the professionals do” That is the point, children are not adults, they see the world differently and learn in a different way than adults do.

Let's think about a child trying to skate with a puck from one end of the rink to the other.

1. How long will this take? How much energy will this require?
2. In which situation will the child be more involved in a game? In the close space of the smaller cross-ice surface or the wide-open area of the full-ice surface?

A study of hockey games played on the full-ice surface by George Kingston found:

- In a sixty minute running time hockey game between 6-8 year old children, the average player had possession of the puck for 20.7 seconds
- Top professional players were also timed and no player exceeded 85 seconds of puck possession time
- Youth players had an average of less than 0.5 shots per game and professional players only 1.5 shots
- In a sixty-minute children's game the actual playing time of the game was 20 minutes and 38 seconds
- Individual players are on the ice every third or fourth shift results in even less ice time

The study concluded that:

- For young players in the "full-ice game model" of development, the youngest players would require between 180 games to have 60 minutes of actual puck possession time to execute their stick handling, passing, pass receiving and shooting skills
- Professional players would require 60 games to ensure 60 minutes of puck control skill development
- **Many young players never touched the puck during the game**

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## PRACTICING

- Children have more energy with which they can improve their skills when they are skating 30 meters across the ice surface instead of 60-meter length of the ice surface
- Group sizes become smaller this means learning and teaching become more effective
- Drills designed according to the varying skill levels of players within the group are easier to organise
- More puck contact resulting in improved puck control skills.
- More repetition/frequency in drills in one ice session.
- Decision-making skills are enhanced,
- More decisions must be made more frequently at a higher tempo.

## PLAYING

- Increased puck possession time for each player.
- Individual technical skills develop more quickly.
- More ice time for each player.
- Children remain active between their shifts with various activities in the neutral zone.
- Each player's activity increases greatly.
- Scoring skills are enhanced since the players have more shooting opportunities
- The goalkeeper's reading of the game and reaction to changing game situations becomes more effective.
- More repetition for goalkeepers.
- The game is full of continuously changing situations.
- The speed in playing situations increases, which will require quicker mental and physical reactions by the players
- Due to increased tempo, all of the team members take part in solving the playing situations, which leads to a sharing of responsibilities between the players.
- Hockey sense, or understanding the principles of the game, is being developed
- There are no unnecessary breaks in the game.

## GENERAL ORGANISATION

- More efficient use of ice time and space.
- The size of the rink is in proportion with the size of the players.
- The child sized goal nets are in proportion with the size of players.
- The middle zone is available for other purposes (player's bench, warm-up area, skill competition) while games are played in the end zones.
- The IIHF recommends that teams play with two or three units of four or five players and one goalkeeper which results in each player having more ice time.
- More ice time for practicing and playing is available to more teams within a single club.
- Many teams can practice together by sharing the ice surface

## GENERAL SPIRIT OF PARTICIPATION AND FUN

- More children get a chance to play ice hockey.
- More children will experience a feeling of success when playing hockey.
- The same exciting and fun environment is created.
- Both more and less gifted children will benefit from close/tight action on the ice.
- Children are excited and motivated to continue playing hockey.
- Hockey will be more appealing and enjoyable to a wider range of children and their parents



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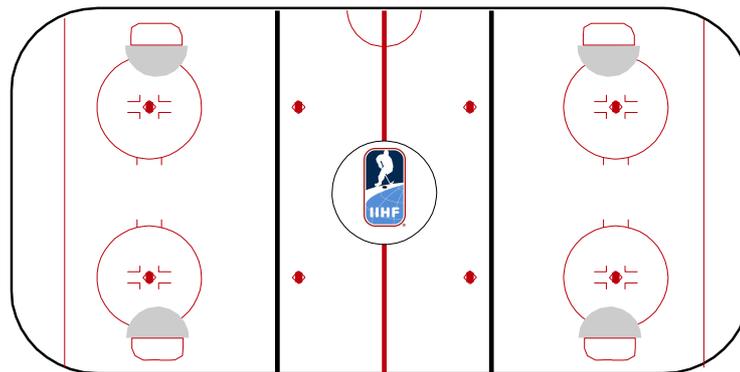
## The Playing Rules

Playing Rules for Children Under 10 Years Old, which have been tested and developed over time in many countries around the world, have been included in this manual to support you in organising games for the children. These rules enable the children to develop hockey skills in an environment that fosters fun, learning, participation by all, and mental and physical development.

### The Playing Rules for Children Under 10 Years Old

#### Cross-Ice Playing Surface, Cross-Ice Rink Boards, and Child Sized Goal Nets

##### Cross-Ice Playing Surface

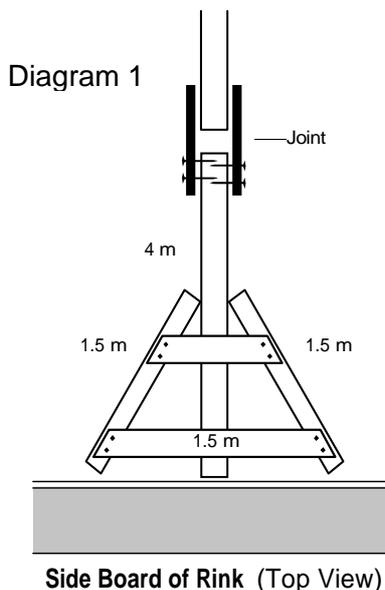


All games will be played across the ice in the end zones on one-third of the rink.

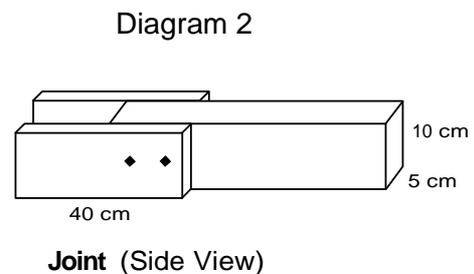
##### Cross-Ice Rink Boards

The IIHF recommends that every arena construct a light board barrier which:

- is easy and quick to move on and off the ice surface,
- is approximately 10 cm high and 5 cm wide,
- has no support legs to hinder the puck from sliding along the boards,
- forms a continuous barrier from the boards one side of the rink to the opposite side,
- uses some form of mechanism to easily hook the boards together,
- is constructed of, for example, wood, aluminium, fibreglass, or an old fire hose.



To keep the puck in play it is recommended that a "corner board" be constructed. The "corner board" constructions should be the same height and width as the boards which run along the blue line. An example of the light board barrier construction is shown in diagrams 1 and 2.



## Child Sized Goal Nets

It is recommended that Learn to Play Goal Nets be used to give the goalkeeper a greater chance of success, which will in turn build confidence.

The goals should be located one meter from the sideboards of the rink and half way between the end boards of the rink and the cross-ice rink boards set up on the blue line.

Two Learn to Play Goal Net construction examples are provided below.

## Lightweight Goal Nets

Lightweight goals, measuring 90 cm high, 130 cm wide and 70 cm deep can be used, constructed of 1.5 to 2.0 cm tubing. The lower end of the goal posts should have small pegs to keep the goal in position. (see diagram 3 and 4)

Diagram 3

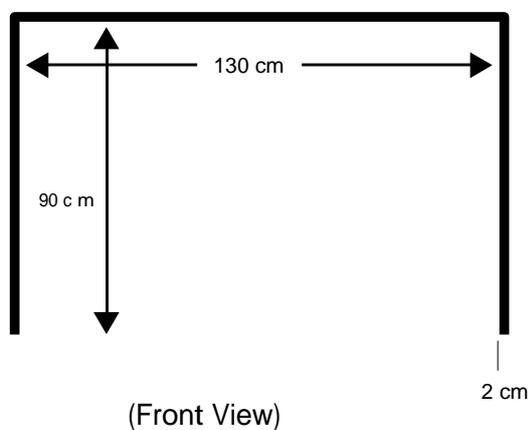
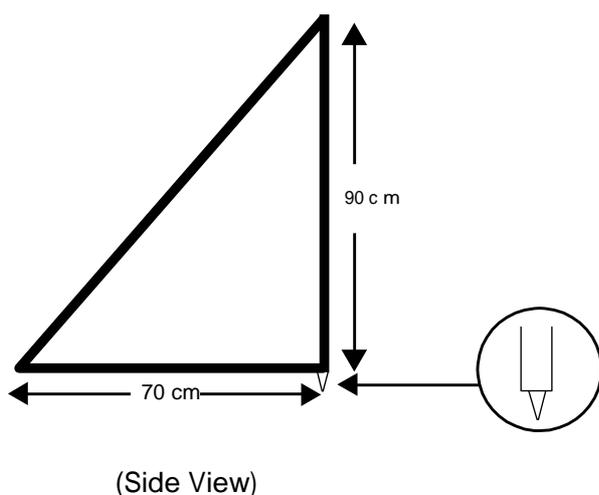


Diagram 4



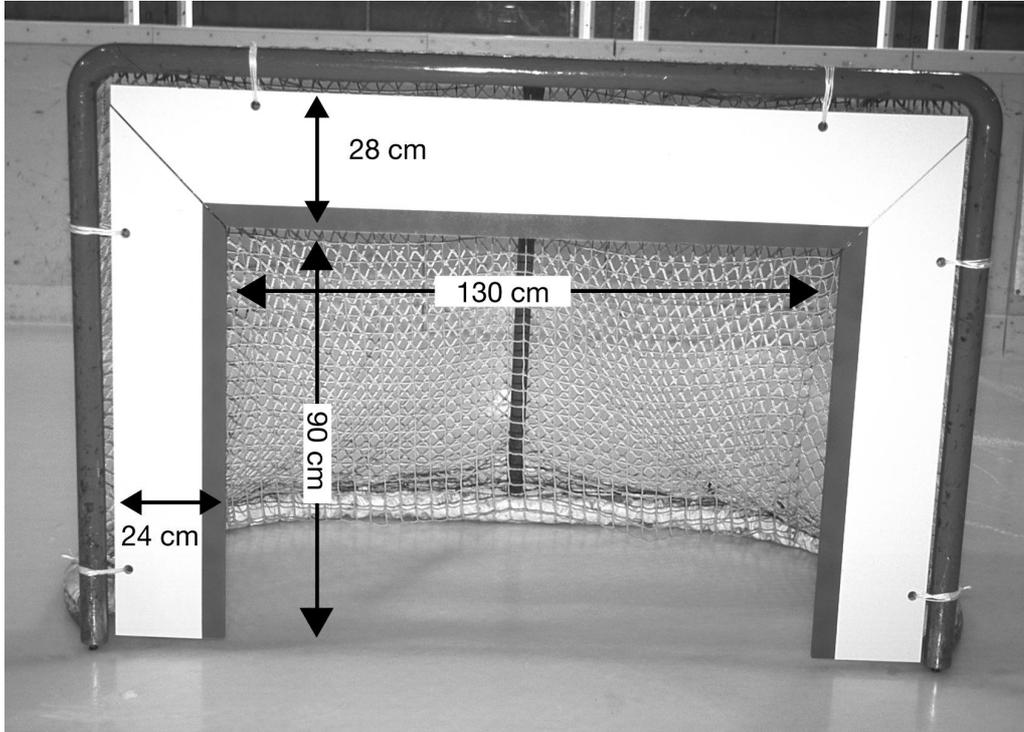


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## Goal Insert

These lightweight goal inserts could be constructed using wood or plastic. The inserts should be made to fit inside the posts of a normal goal net. The insert should have an opening 90 cm high and 130 cm wide. The insert can be fastened to the goal posts and cross bar using straps or hooks. (diagram 5 and 6)

Diagram 5



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## Equipment

Remember that the children being taught are small and in order for them to achieve maximum enjoyment and optimise their understanding of the skills, junior sized equipment should be used.

### Junior Size Sticks

All players are encouraged to use junior sized sticks. Some benefits of using junior size sticks are:

- they enable better puck control
- they are lighter, and therefore improve balance
- they are less expensive than senior sticks

### Lightweight Pucks

The overall diameter, thickness of the puck should be the same as a normal game puck (minimum weight is 80 grams and maximum is 130 grams). Options for lightweight pucks are outlined below.

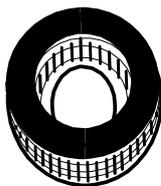
#### Blue Puck

- This is a normal size puck, blue in colour, which is made of a lightweight material.

#### Puck with a hole

- This is a normal puck that has a 50 mm diameter hole in the centre.

Diagram 7



Tip: If there is a lot of snow on the ice, wrap a few rounds of plastic tape around the puck to keep the snow out of the centre of the puck to ensure that the puck slides easily on the ice surface.

## Game Organisation

### Statistics

No statistics or league standings are to be recorded; however, a game sheet must be filled out so that the federation has a record that the game took place. Scores are not shown on the game time clock.

### Game Officials

Either a coach or referee will act as to the game official for the game.

### Off-Ice Officials

The home team should arrange for a timekeeper.

### Face-offs

Face-offs will take place in the centre of the playing surface at the beginning of the game and the period, as well as after a goal, after a break in the play (when the goalkeeper freezes the puck), or when changing the players.



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## **Playing Time**

The length of the game is to be determined by the amount of time available.

## **Player Participation**

All the players participating must be played evenly in every game.

## **Shift Changes**

At the signal from the timekeeper, at a maximum of 90 seconds running time, the units will change. The units will always play at even strength (5 - 5, 4 - 4).

## **Length of the playing shifts**

The maximum length of the shift is 90 seconds running time

## **Offside and Icing**

There are no blue line offside, icing etc

## **Body Checking**

No bodychecking is allowed

## **Violating the Rules; Penalties**

When a player violates the rules, the game official will stop the game by blowing the whistle and explaining the reason for the stoppage to the player. No penalties are given. A new face-off will take place in the centre of the playing surface. If necessary the game official can remove a player from the game for the remainder of the shift.

If a player continuously violates the rules, the coach from the player's team may remove him or her for the remainder of the game and substitute a new player in his or her place.

## **Centre Zone**

For maximum ice use and player development, players that are not playing should participate in drills for skating, stick-handling, passing and shooting in the centre zone. This zone should also be used as the player's bench.



## TEACHING TOOLS

Below is a Tool Box, which has a list of the teaching tools that will assist in the operation of a successful Learn to Play Program. As the coach gain experience they are encouraged to add their own teaching tools to the Tool Box to improve the learning environment during practices.





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## Ice Diagram Legend

The following symbols are used in the Learn to Play Program Lesson Manuals.

chair	h	puck	■	passing	- - - ▶
pylon	Δ	forward skating	→	shooting	⇒
hockey stick	└─┘	backward skate	⤵	agility board	┆
player	X	puck carrying	⤵	jump over	┆┆
coach	©	stop		step over	┆┆
paint dot	*	lateral movement		group of players	

