



2024/2025 U9 Full Ice Pilot

Introduction

PCAHA is excited to announce that during the 2024/25 season we will be running a U9 Full Ice pilot program.

The first years of hockey need to be a positive experience. A fun and exciting start gives young players the opportunity to enjoy hockey for life!



U7 and U9 hockey should be delivered through a progressive, learn-to-play teaching curriculum. Children learn best through practice drills and skill sessions, as well as informal games such as shinny, freeze tag and obstacle courses.

The skills of skating, puck control, passing and shooting are introduced and refined one step at a time. The focus should always be on fun and skill development, but the early years of hockey should also allow youngsters to experience fitness, fair play, and cooperation.

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.

U7 and U9 hockey serves as the foundation upon which the entire hockey experience is built. It is a crucial piece in building the skills of players at every level – players benefit from getting the ‘right start’ in the game.



Rationale for Combining Age Groups

The Hockey Canada model combines seven- and eight-year-old players in U9.

Hockey Canada recommends that like skilled players be grouped together. The development philosophy is to maximize puck touches by all players. When there is a large disparity in skill, less skilled players do not touch the puck with the same frequency as more skilled players. Hockey Canada groups U8/U9 together for the development pathway as it stresses a skills-based development model as opposed to an age-based model.



U9 Major and Minor Divisions

Two streams will exist.

- U9 Minor (development stream) / U9 Major (proficient stream)

Each MHA will make their own determination on the number of U9 Major (proficient) and Minor (developing) teams they will ice each season. All teams within each division must be balanced as per PCAHA rules. Each MHA will determine the number of teams in both Major and Minor divisions based on their own internal Association requirements, number of players, ice availability, etc. An association may choose to ice teams in the Minor division only if it so chooses. Teams within a division must be balanced, however.

Team Balancing

All players shall be rostered within the Major or Minor streams in accordance with Section R of the PCAHA Rule Book:

An Association forming teams for house league play and/or inter-Association play shall divide all players within U9 into equally balanced teams prior to commencing inter-Association play. "Equally balanced teams" shall mean teams which are balanced on the basis of the skill levels of the players and competitive strength.

In other words, associations having multiple teams in a category (Major or Minor) must balance their teams.

Roster Size

The desired roster size is 18 players (range of 17 – 19) as per Hockey Canada guidelines.



Game Play Guidelines (2024/25 ONLY)

U9 may play full-ice games within their Association from October 15th until November 30th. Inter-Association exhibition or league games may be organized starting December 1st.

For Associations only registering one U9 team in a division, inter-Association exhibition games may be arranged with another Association in that division prior to December 1st, with the approval of the applicable Managing Director.

- No score shall be kept in games
- The 2 minute buzzer will not be used
- Icings and offsides will be called
- Referees will be used
- Penalties will be called, teams will play shorthanded if this occurs
- Games not to exceed 60 minute time slot
- All players play all positions – forward/defence/goaltender
- No full-time goaltenders
- Fair and as close to equal ice time as possible, shortening of the bench is not permitted

Tournament/Jamborees

The playing of Tournaments/Jamborees is an important part of culture, team building and the fun of hockey playing experience. PCAHA and Hockey Canada encourage teams and associations to continue to operate and attend these events while staying within the “Maximum Game” guidelines as presented.

During out 2024/25 pilot, full ice tournaments at U9 are for PCAHA teams only.

If hosting or operating a tournament please ensure that no score is kept, and therefore no winners or losers are determined throughout the event. In other words, a traditional 4 team event with the top 2 teams playing in the final is not permitted.

HC recommendations are as follows:

- 4 team tournament - 3 game event – each team plays each team once.
5 team tournament - 4 game event – each team plays each team once.
- Entire schedule must be completed in advance of the start of the tournament.
- Tournaments and Jamborees should state if the tournament is for U9 Major or Minor teams.

Hockey Canada Pathways

For further information about the U9 pathways along with an FAQ, please refer to the Hockey Canada website:

[U9 Hockey Canada Pathway](#)