
IV. Junior Development

4.a Parent Orientation Sessions

Parent orientation sessions provide an excellent introduction to your club. It is an opportunity for the parents to meet the coaches, club officials and other parents with children participating in your club. It is at these meetings that they can become acquainted with the club facilities and programs, the necessary equipment required for their children to play hockey and the safety aspects of the game. This chapter includes information on how to run an orientation session, and the responsibilities of coach, parent and player alike.

Purpose of a Parent Orientation Meeting

Whether it be the Coach or the Junior Coordinator, it is important to establish effective lines of communication with team parents as early as possible. Preseason meetings are great for a general overview if the teams are not selected. Once teams are selected each coach may have a preferred method for conducting the meetings. Location is not necessarily important, as the meeting can take place at the clubhouse, at the home of a parent or coach or even at a team picnic. A letter inviting the parents should include a brief welcome to the club and introduction of the coach as well as stating the issues to be discussed at the meeting. (*See Appendix 16*)

Such meetings are beneficial as they:

- Inform parents of your expectations of both them and of their children
- Enable parents to understand the objectives and goals of the program
- Provide parents with the opportunity to become acquainted with the coach
- Provide parents with an understanding of the rules of hockey
- Inform parents about the nature of the sport and safety measures
- Establish clear lines of communication between you, the parents, and the players
- Allow you to obtain parental support and volunteers
- Enable you to answer any questions that the parents may have

Parent information letters can be used to inform parents about the club and its activities (*See Appendix 17*)

Organising the Meeting

Before you hold the meeting consider the following points to ensure that you are well prepared and you have everything in order:

- Hold the meeting early in the season, preferably before the first team practice
- Prepare any handouts you would like to distribute such as
 - Team list
 - Team Goals for the season
 - Schedule of practices and games
 - Agenda for the meeting

- Club Rules

It is very important to be organised in order to conduct the meeting efficiently. Parents need to feel reassured that their children are in good hands and a disorganised coach will struggle to gain the respect of the parents and the players.

The Meeting

The meeting should be open to all parents and players who intend to be involved during the junior season. This meeting should be run by the junior co-ordinator, who introduces the club and the coaches that will be involved during the season. Some background information about the coaches should be included such as how long they have been involved in hockey and the reasons why they coach. The activities that the club has planned for the juniors should also be explained.

The clubs coaching philosophy is an important aspect of the meeting, and something that most parents are concerned about. Incorporate the following issues into your discussion:

- What you consider to be the value in playing hockey
- The importance you assign to having fun and developing skills
- The methods that you propose for teaching skills
- Your philosophy regarding player rotation, substitution, playing time
- Any team rules and guidelines as well as disciplinary procedures
- The importance you assign to winning and losing

1. Specifics of the program:

- Practice schedule (number of times per week and the duration of each session)
- Game schedule and venues
- Equipment required (uniform, mouth guard, stick, shin guards, water bottle)

2. Club Responsibilities

- Provide coaches (who adhere to the club's responsibilities) for the teams
- Demonstrate leadership and good sportsmanship
- Treat each player fairly
- Ensure all practices are planned according to the age and skill level of the players
- Enforce player safety at all times
- Provide a safe environment (be at practice on time and remain until all players have been collected)
- Provide players with positive feedback
- Assist the players with goal setting
- Give parents a schedule of practices and games well in advance
- Adhere to your coaching philosophies
- Respect all opposition and officials
- Adhere to the code of conduct as outlined by the club

3. Player Responsibilities

Each player is expected to do the following

- Attend practices/games regularly, and arrive on time
- Let the coach know in advance if you will not be attending a practice or game
- Bring the correct playing equipment to each practice and game
- Show commitment to the team by making an effort in practice
- Work towards good sportsmanship and teamwork
- Respect the opposition and officials
- Encourage fellow team mates in a positive manner
- Adhere to the athletes code of conduct as outlined by the club

4. Parent Responsibilities

The following is required of the players' parents:

- Ensure your children are at practices and games on time
- Be supportive of all the players on the team
- Refrain from criticising the opposing team
- Encourage your child to be a team player
- Give positive feedback
- Encourage your child to have fun rather than putting all the importance on winning
- Respect the officials
- Respect the role of the coach and refrain from coaching your child during games

Team Management

Parents often make the most valuable volunteers. This is your chance to get them involved with both the club and the team. They are great at assisting with fundraisers, uniforms or running the kiosk. They simply need to be asked. Have them organise a transport system to help out parents who may be working ensuring that the players arrive on time. They can assist with contacting other players if there has been a change to the schedule or a game cancellation.

Some may be willing to help out at practice or on match day, as either an assistant coach or umpire. If you present these opportunities to them they have a far better chance of being fulfilled than not saying anything at all. Offer parents the opportunity to take a coaching or umpiring course to help them understand the game. You can incorporate a brief rules clinic to explain the game to parents who are new or haven't participated in hockey for a while. Finally ask parents if they have any questions or concerns for you.

Dealing with Parents and resolving conflict

Coaching is often a rewarding experience, but sometimes you may encounter a little difficulty with parents. Some may want more playing time for their child, while others may question your coaching ability. Whatever the issue is, parents are generally concerned about their child, sometimes at your expense. Don't let this dishearten you.

Listed are some suggestions that may help you in resolving a problem with parents:

- Speak with the person in private. Choose an appropriate time and place if the field is not suitable. Don't discuss their concerns in front of the team.
- Be as open and honest with them as you can, reinforcing your coaching philosophies if need be. Do what you believe to be best for the team, not the parents. Try not to be defensive. No coach can please everyone!
- Acknowledge and understand their concern by listening to their ideas and feelings. Ask questions to clarify any points. Often a parent will vent their frustrations by just talking. Listen to their viewpoint, and then thank them for it.
- Know the club and the game rules. Be prepared to abide by them and to explain them to parents.
- Suggest ways to resolve the situation and offer to discuss the matter again if the problem persists.
- Show respect for your players by not discussing them with other parents.
- Don't blame or punish players for their parents' actions.
- Remind the parents not to criticise their children during practice or a game. Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
- Most importantly, be fair. If you treat all players equally and with respect, you will gain their respect and that of their parents as well.

In most instances parents are usually thinking about what they believe to be best for their child. As a coach you will deal with all sorts of athletes and parents who may have different ideas to those of your own. It is up to you to address these differences in a positive manner so that the season will be enjoyable for everyone involved.

Parent Hockey

This is an opportune time to introduce Parent Hockey sessions for parents of children who haven't played hockey before. These sessions can be a fun fitness hour, which include hockey and finish up with a coffee or drink at the end of the session. This is a great way for parents to learn about their child's game of hockey and also about the club, as well as getting to know other parents. Often these people are willing to do something for the club (volunteer) as they too feel a sense of belonging, having participated in a club activity.

Summary

A parents' orientation session offers a great opportunity for you to introduce parents to the club and the activities offered. During these meetings the Junior Coordinator can convey coaching philosophies and the importance of fairness and respect for coaches, players and officials. The responsibilities of the club, parent and player are outlined to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in the game, while enjoying the benefits that hockey has to offer.

4.b Junior Recruitment Sessions

In order to run a successful hockey club, you will need to be able to attract players, both novice and experienced. This chapter is aimed at the practical part of junior player recruitment, focusing on open days and introductory hockey sessions. Both the technical, tactical and social aspects will be discussed, giving you the insight to run your own hockey sessions.

Practical Hockey

Hockey is renowned as being a game of skill. The level of skill is dependent upon the exposure that one has had to the game. Hockey players range from under six years of age to over 60 years of age, each having various skills. The earlier the exposure to the game, the more likely it is that the player will grasp the concepts and skills of the game.

There are many aspects of player development, and all of them are important in forming a safe and fun environment. Whether learning individual skills, tactics, and team play, or understanding rules of the game and sportsmanship, players need to continue their development both on and off the field.

Skill development is a key component of developing sound hockey players. Before looking at skills to be learned, it is important to review the main components of skill development. Learning basic skills at a young age will set the foundation for any and all future success and enjoyment within the game of hockey. By learning these skills, children will be able to participate and contribute while having more fun.

Skills are one of the important aspects of the game and can be divided into 3 components:

- Technical Skills
- Tactical Skills
- Social Skills

1. Technical skills

Technical skills are the fundamentals of hockey. This refers to ball movement, passing and receiving and tackling ability.

2. Tactical skills

This is the manner in which the player utilises his/her technical skills in the game. These skills can be improved by watching hockey and understanding the concept of “off the ball” movement. Players need to control their technical skills to be able to use them efficiently in pressured situations.

3. Social skills

These skills involve the player using individual tactics in connection with his/her teammates.

Skills will only be learnt if the players want to be at practice. In order to keep them interested you need to understand the age that you are coaching. The younger the player, the more emphasis is placed on it being a positive and fun experience and this makes them want to come back each week.

Don't expect too much from the players. Bear in mind when dealing with young players that each one will progress at a different rate. This does not make them better or worse, simply different. Allow children to progress at their own pace.

Organising a junior recruitment program

Junior programs can take the form of introduction sessions, an open day, a week long camp, or a six to eight week program ending in a tournament. Whichever method you choose to use, it is important that you have a well-organised and planned program. Safety should always come first at every session. Check the area of play and the equipment to ensure that everything is safe. Set some ground rules so that the players know the boundaries and be sure that everyone is wearing mouth guards and shin pads. Sessions can take place inside a school gymnasium, out on a grass field or a hockey pitch. Choose an area that allows you the space to play safely.

It is important to know what it is that you want to achieve from your program. Do you want to...?

- Have players interested in hockey
- Have them register with your club
- Teach them the basics of the game (ball control, stick handling, rules)
- Make it a fun and positive experience

Be sure to keep your sessions interesting by not talking too long or working on the same drill for a long time. Make sure you have the attention of all the participants when you are talking and demonstrating. Check that they are not looking into the sun or that there are not distractions going on behind you as you are talking or demonstrating. Keep things as simple as possible and build on each activity.

If you are providing equipment, have a variety of stick lengths and enough balls for everyone. Make sure you have a stick and ball yourself to demonstrate. It is useful to have a whistle and some brochures with your club information. Be in uniform or the correct attire. If possible use a provincial or national player to assist you with demonstrations giving the players something to aspire to.

Content of the session

Games without a stick and ball are a great way to get the players warmed up and ready to participate. This can simply be a game of tag or some other fun activity. This should be a short session in order not to take the focus away from hockey.

Things to include in your session are:

- Wrist work for stick handling
- Footwork: mobility with and without the ball
- Vision: get the players used to looking up
- Space awareness with and without the ball

Demonstrations are important, as they show the players the purpose of the activity. Demonstrations should be both with and without the ball. Ensure that everyone can see what is happening by facing the group and facing away from them. As you demonstrate, be sure to emphasise key points, and ask questions to make sure that everyone understands.

Getting started

Start simply - let the players get a feel for the stick by holding it and show them which side to use. Let them get comfortable moving about with a ball on the end of the stick. This should start out slowly and then progress to a faster speed. Having the players moving in the same direction avoids collision, however they also need to be aware of the others around them and get used to the concept of looking up.

Push-passing and receiving can later be introduced. Using relays or having the players work in pairs allows them all to practise these skills.

Dribbling can be introduced at anytime, explaining the benefits of each of the different types of dribbling used in hockey. Remember that if you are working with young children, they constantly need stimulation; hence you may need to change drills or vary them to keep their attention.

It is beneficial to the player to have a sequential learning pattern. Thus start with 1v 0 drills and progress to 1 vs. 1/2 v 2 game-like situations. If possible have them ending with a shot on goal. These drills can be varied by changing the size of the space or adding in defenders once they are confident with the drill. Small games 2 vs 1/3 vs 3 are useful to develop skills. These can be varied by imposing conditions on the games, e.g. no tackling or hitting, just dribbling or walking with the ball on the end of the stick and using cones to keep them within a certain space. Air dribbling is a good drill if you have the space to do it safely. This is a fun drill that improves hand eye coordination and development. It can also promote the competitive nature within the player.

The use of circuits helps maintain the element of fun in the session and assists with skill development and competition. These can be run as a continual drill or you can allow everyone a couple of minutes at each station. These are particularly good for open days, allowing players to try different aspects of hockey. Make sure you have a coach at each station, to give the players enough support. Depending on the drills that are set up, mini competitions can be held with players scoring

points at the various stations. Playing games is also important; however this can only be done when the basic skills are under control.

When running such a session, it is important to focus on what was performed well and give plenty of positive feedback. Winning should not be the focus. Emphasise the correct hand positions for the different skills and do not be too bothered about the ball hitting the feet in the initial stages.

1. Example session - Dribbling

The group can be organised using lines or general space depending on the level: let the complete beginners move in only one direction to prevent collisions. Before you begin this session, check that the playing environment and equipment are safe and there is enough space for the players to move about. Explain a few rules so that everyone has a fun and safe experience.

STEP 1: Have the players tap the ball anywhere in the space designated, keeping it close to the stick. Emphasise 2 hands on the stick at all times. Strong wrists are important; have players practice rotating the stick, at first in the air focusing on the flat side of the stick moving from the right to the left. Have them practice this with a ball, keeping the flat side of the stick closest to the ball. They can do this on the spot, moving the ball from foot to foot, and then graduate to moving with the ball.

STEP 2: Have the players dribble on the left side of the body, keeping the ball close to the stick. Hand position can be demonstrated again showing the players how the right hand slides around the stick and the left does the turning.

STEP 3: Demonstrate how the stick can be used to stop the ball, by turning it over and using the flat side. Explain how it prevents the player from losing control of the ball or the ball hitting their feet or some one else.

STEP 4: Have players dribble and stop the ball when you blow the whistle. Introduce the idea of looking up so as to not bump into another player. Explain the split vision concept of looking up and seeing the ground ahead at the same time (this is easier the more the knees are bent). Explain that it is important to control the speed of our feet. When the ball stops, the feet stop too.

STEP 5: Have the players dribble the ball around at different speeds, looking up as they go along. In pairs, have players line up long on the side line and dribble up around a cone and back to their partner. To encourage the ball carrier to look up, have the partner hold up his/her fingers, requiring the ball carrier to say how many fingers their partner is holding up before they deliver the ball to their partner.

STEP 6: Set up cones for the players to dribble through and around. This can be set up as a relay, with the group who completes the course first being the winners. Allow a couple of practice runs first.

2. Introductory day session plan

Below is an outline of a one-day introductory session that can be used for an open day or a beginners introduction session and modified depending on the age and experience of the players.

Time	Content	Notes
9.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Registration □ Distribute sticks and balls □ Depending on numbers and age separate players into groups □ 2 coaches per group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Name tags for coaches and players □ Emphasis on safety □ Group sizes will vary as players arrive
10.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Welcome everyone □ Introduce coaches □ Warm up and stretches (game of tag for the U11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Answer any questions □ Stress the importance of warm up and stretching (stress the fun part when working with U11)
10.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ As a group review all rules and emphasise safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ This can be done pre warm up
10.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ In groups -dribbling and footwork skills □ Dribble with 2 hands on stick only using flat side of stick □ Dribble as above, and practice stopping ball with flat side of stick □ Teach players to look up to avoid collisions and opponents □ Continue dribbling - this time change direction and speed □ Dribble around other players □ In pairs follow the leader □ Incorporate relays with cones to dribble around 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Demo the grip and how wrists rotate - focus on using flat side of the stick □ Stop the ball by turning stick over - no feet □ Teach how to look at the ball and the field ahead □ Keep the ball under control at all times □ Make area smaller as they improve □ Encourage vision □ Change the distance between cones for tighter ball control
10.50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Water Break 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Set up next session
11.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Passing - in twos, one ball, 2 metres apart focus on ball control and looking and passing to partner □ Receiving- move to the ball and watch the ball onto the stick 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Emphasis short accurate passes and how to stop the ball (cradle ball as though it is an egg)
11.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Small games - use rules to enforce flat side of stick and no feet, no swinging sticks □ Small numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Safety □ More possession per player when playing 3 or 4 aside
11.25	Water Break	
11.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Small games - spread the players by rolling a ball into space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Emphasis safety, vision and passing □ No tackling
11.40	LUNCH	Set up new circuit
12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Individual Skills stations/circuits i.e. : □ Dribble around cones □ Dribble through cones □ Dodging to the right /left □ Passing between cones in pairs □ Running up and back (without ball) □ Dribbling and shooting at goal □ Flicking/lifting ball over a stick 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Demo stations □ Have players line up at each of the different stations. (2-3 per station) and rotate stations after a minute or 2. □ Keep score of how many times the station is completed in a certain time
12.50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Air dribble - hand eye coordination □ Demo bouncing ball on stick □ Emphasise strong wrists □ Keep stick parallel to the ground □ Once mastered try moving around and air dribbling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Safety - spread the group out and clear all equipment away □ Count how many bounces in 30 secs □ Need more space
1.05	Water break	Set up games
1.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Small games 2x 10mins □ Play; no goal keeper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ 2-3 coaching points per game □ ball control and foot work

Time	Content	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Talk about the game ▫ Play again (10mins) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ stopping and tackling ▫ moving and passing
1.50	Water break	
2.00	Demo 1 v 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ attacker: dribbling, moving feet, moving ball, dodging, change of speed ▫ defender: how to tackle and be the attacker 	
2.10	Players practice 1 v 1	Set up a grid or tackle boxes
2.20	Games - introduce shooting and the circle, GK if anyone interested	Emphasis 1 v 1 shooting
2.40	Collect equipment and bring groups together	End of session - thank players and provide flyers with club information

Summary

This chapter has outlined the importance of skills in hockey and the advantages of teaching them at a young age. Junior hockey programs need to be well planned to ensure that the player has fun in a safe environment. Incorporated are examples of introductory session plans that your club can use to both attract and develop players.

4.c Mini Hockey

Hockey can be played at a very young age, as long as it is modified and adapted to the physical strength, the motor skills and psychological characteristics of the age group. It needs an *enthusiastic* coach that has the *imagination* of the age of his/her team and who is able to teach the children *step by step* in a *fun, educational* and *safe* environment. Mini Hockey can also be played elsewhere, using existing structures like netball, tennis or basketball courts.

Further on in this chapter we will give an educational range, which starts with 1v1 and moves via 3v3/4v4, 5v5/6v6 and 7v7/8v8 into 11v11.

But first we will give you an overview of the different age groups and their capabilities.

Capabilities per age group

a. 6 & 7 year olds

At the age of 6 and 7 children can do a range of activities in which they run and play, practice motor skills and be introduced to the safe use of a hockey stick. Basic skill development is important in order to play safely, however their attention span can often be short, thus you need to change the activities and not spend too long on a drill in order to keep them interested and stimulated.

At this age you can vary games and exercises with and without stick and ball. The children still live in a fantasy world, so change your "dry" exercises into fairy tale ones, using princes, palaces, thieves and animals! When they know the basics they can start looking around and play with other children. Via the combination plays 2v0, 2v1, 3v0 and 3v1 the young player will grow into the 3v3 game.

4v4 can also be played. This is a more difficult game, because the children have now an extra (deep) option to choose from. It is best to do this with older (beginner) players, who are more aware of their environment, which consists of their teammates and opponents.

b. 8 & 9 year olds

Children at this age still find it difficult to concentrate for long periods of time. However, this is the ideal learning age (8-12 years old), with their physique and co-ordination being perfectly suited to learn a wide range of new techniques. They learn by watching others play, and from their own experience, hence the more exposure to the game the better. Demonstrations are important at this age; they watch and copy easily. Overtraining or difficult drills can turn players away from the game. Keep sessions varied as well as challenging.

In games of 6v6, children are now asked to use their teammates, rather than playing alone. The use of space on the playing field should be introduced, avoiding the scenarios of all players swarming around the ball! They can play over larger areas, they can take a free hit (or push), they can make eliminations and they love to score!

Rotate your players, so that they all get a feel for attacking and defending.

c. 9, 10 & 11 year olds

The children in this age category have good coordination skills, and are usually willing to learn. Technical skills should be more advanced than in the younger age group. Expand on what has already been learnt. Player positions may be more specialized, with players being taught the roles of each position. Still rotate them, so that they know how it is to play in different positions on the field. Game-like situations should be encouraged, and drills should be practised with speed, once players are comfortable. Be wary of over training.

The 8v8 game (or 7v7 without a goalie) is meant to bridge the big gap between the 6- and 11-a-side game. Children in the age group 9-10 don't generally have the strength to hit the ball over the distance of an 11-a-side field and they do not have the capacity to work in a big group.

Finally, when they are older, "wiser" and strong enough (around the age of 11), they can play the original hockey game, with 11 players on each side!

Mini Hockey: an educational range from 1v1 to 11v11

Practicing and playing are nice, but children also want to play a game! Via modified (mini) hockey *all* children will be able to play a "real" game. They play in a smaller space and with a limited number of players. Below is a description of which game *can* be played at what age. Of course you will always have young players that are ahead of or behind their group. The ages given below are averages.

The role of the game leader (we don't use strict umpires in mini hockey) is very important. He or she has to make sure that all players have fun while practising and learning through his/her explanation of the game.

Try to arrange games against other clubs/schools, which will give the young players the experience of meeting other teams with other qualities. In mini hockey it is not about winning, it is about a *fun, educational* and *safe* experience for each player. The children might not be aware of this (they always want to win!), but the game leader and parents should guide their pupils away from that perspective.

a. 1v1 (6 years old)

As soon as these young players have learnt the basics via a wide range of fun exercises, they can look out for an "opponent". Emphasis should be put on *safe* play: safely capturing the ball off each other's stick and safely defending this.

b. 3v3 (6/7 years old) (see figure 3)

On a one/eight field with 2 goals on each side, players suddenly find out that it is useful to switch the field and move the ball to a team mate who is close to the other goal. Ball movement and off the ball running are important in this game. The rules which are used are to ensure that the game is played *safely*. A game of two times 15 minutes is enough for this age group. A time-out can be called to explain a situation and to re-group the players. If you have enough players, then you can make teams of 6 players. In this case the A1 team (with 3 players) can play 15 minutes against the B1 team and A2 against B2, and after the break A1 plays against B2 and A2 against B1. The game leader should not be a strict umpire; he or she needs to have a feel for the game and the young players and needs to make the game fun and educational for both teams!

Field: 1/8 field (see figure 3). Two goals on each side (so in total 4 goals). 5 meter line instead of circle. Space between cone-goals: 2 meter. Space between goal and sideline: ca. 4 meter.

Rules:

- safety rules: only play with flat side of the stick, only push or other movement with stick only moving on the ground, ball must stay on the ground, no "raised sticks", no hacking on the stick, no tackling from the left (if this causes a dangerous situation), no physical contact with opponent, ball needs to be stopped first before playing it on.
- no obstruction, no "foot" rule
- free hit and side hit in: everybody must be 5 meters away
- instead of penalty corner, take a free hit on the 5 meter line (no direct shot on goal allowed)
- long corner at cross 5 meter line and side line (also no direct shot on goal allowed).

c. 4v4 (see figure 3)

This game is also played on a one/eight field. It is more difficult than the 3v3 game, because the players have now an extra (deep) option to choose from. As mentioned above, you had better do this with older (beginner) players, who are more aware of their environment: their teammates and their opponents. The rules are the same as in the 3v3 game.

d. 6v6 with, or 5v5 without a goalkeeper (8/9 years old) (see figure 4)

On a quarter field, the 8/9-year-olds will be able to play the ball to each other and also watch out for opponents. Teamwork will be emphasised and passing and receiving are important aspects. The game should be 2x25 minutes halves, with a break of 5 minutes. A time out can be called to explain a situation and to re-group the players.

The game leader is, similar to the 3v3 game, not a strict umpire; he or she needs to have a feel for the game and the young players and also needs to make the games fun and educational for both teams!

Field: Quarter field (see figure 4), with 1 goal on each sideline. 10 meter line instead of a circle. Space between cone goals: normal width (3,66 meter).

Line up: the field of play can easily be set up with 2 forwards, one mid-fielder, 2 defenders ("5" in the dice-form) and a *goal keeper* behind that. In the 5v5 game there is no goalkeeper.

Rules:

- safety rules: only playing with flat side of the stick, ball must stay on the ground, no "sticks", no hacking on the stick, no tackles from the left (if this causes a dangerous situation), no physical contact with opponent, ball needs to be stopped first before playing it
- no obstruction, no "foot" rule
- free hit and side hit in: only the opponent needs to be 5 meters away
- instead of a penalty corner, take the free hit on 10 meter line (now *everybody* 5 meters away and no direct shot on goal allowed)
- long corner at 5 meter from corner - on the sideline (also no direct shot on goal allowed and *everybody* 5 meters away)
- penalty stroke at 6,4 meter from goal - no high balls allowed

e. 8v8 with or 7v7 without a goalkeeper (9/10 years old) (see figure 5)

8 v 8 - (9/10 years) 8 a-side hockey on a half-sized pitch builds on the concepts of 6 a-side hockey. All aspects of tactical and technical skills are used in decision making on the field. The players have to observe the field and cooperate with their teammates. Situational plays can also be taught and practised. 8 a-side continues to develop skills without taking the fun out of the game, and takes the age of the players into consideration. The game can also be played with 7 players a-side, without a goalkeeper.

Players in this age group can play games of 2 x 30 minute halves, with a 5 minute break. A time out can be called to explain a situation and to re-group the players.

The game leader is, similar to the 3v3 and 6v6 game, not a strict umpire; he or she needs to have a feel for the game and the young players and needs to be able to give both teams a good time. The field is now bigger, so 2 game leaders are recommended.

Field: Half size field (see Figure 5), with 1 goal on each sideline. Normal circles or a rectangular "15 meter area" (15x30 meter). Normal width goals (3,66 meter).

Line up: The field can be set up with 3 forwards, a midfielder and 3 defence and a *goalkeeper*, preparing the players for 11aside hockey. The players are taught to stay in position and to be a support or a passing option for the ball carrier, rather than everyone swarming on the ball. The defence and attack need to work together with the assistance of the mid-field, which helps distribute the ball between the two.

Rules:

safety rules: only playing with flat side of the stick, ball must stay on the ground, no "sticks", no hacking on the stick, no tackles from the left (if this causes a dangerous situation), no physical contact with opponent, ball needs to be stopped first before playing it

- no obstruction, no "foot" rule
- free hit and side hit in: only the opponent needs to be 5 meters away
- penalty corner or, if there are no circles, free hit on 15 meter line (now *everybody* 5 meters away and no direct shot on goal allowed!)
- long corner at 5 meter from corner - on the sideline (also no direct shot on goal allowed and *everybody* 5 meters away)
- penalty stroke at 6,4 meter from goal.

f. 11 v 11 - (10 years +)

And then finally the big step towards full size hockey! The rules will be the same as the "normal" 11v11 rules. Umpiring will still be an "educational" job; the umpire needs to be aware that children in this age group still need to learn.

Many variations for the line-up can be instituted using 11 players. Using 3 forwards, 3 midfielders, 3 defenders and a goalkeeper, means a smooth transition from the 8-a-side hockey.

You can also have 2 forwards, 4 midfielders, 4 defence and a goalkeeper, or 3 forwards, 4 midfielders, 3 defence and a goalkeeper to give a few examples. The full field is used and all rules of the game should apply. 11 a-side hockey should continue to build on the technical and tactical skills that the players have learned.

Important

Whether playing 1v1, 3v3/4v4, 5v5/6v6, 7v7/8v8 or 11v11 games, remember that whenever children are playing hockey you should enforce safety rules and wear proper playing attire. The aim is to keep the sessions *fun*, *safe* and *educational*, so that the players continue with the game.

Figure 3:

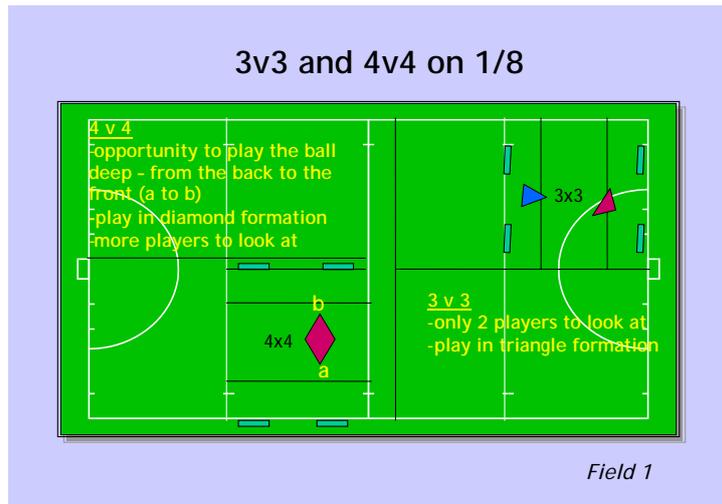


Figure 4:



Figure 5:



