



# USA Hockey's American Development Model



## Hockey for Life

**Any Age** – Players can enter at any stage. ‘Hockey for Life’ can provide quality recreational opportunities for all ages. USA Hockey also hopes that as adults we lead a physically active lifestyle and continue to contribute to the sport through volunteerism as coaches, referees and administrators.

### Active Start

#### Ages 0-6

This early development period is essential for acquiring fundamental movement skills (running, gliding, jumping, kicking, catching, striking...) that lay the foundation for more complex movements, thereby preparing children for a physically active lifestyle. USA Hockey encourages activity that incorporates fundamental movement skills in the 4 environments that lead to physical literacy:

- In the water: Swimming
- On the ground: Athletics
- In the air: Gymnastics
- On ice and snow: Sliding (skating)

Kids should start with a learn to skate program and then a learn to play program as their initial steps into ice hockey.

#### 6 & Under (Mites):

50-60 ice sessions  
2-3 ice sessions per week  
50-60 minute ice sessions  
7-9 skaters per team  
0 full-time goalies  
34-40 quality practices  
16-20 cross-ice game days

### FUNDamentals

#### Ages 6-8 Female

#### Ages 6-9 Male

The objective of this stage is to refine fundamental movement skills and begin to acquire basic sports skills. This is the time when a foundation is laid for future acquisition of more advanced skills.

The focus is on the development of physical literacy. Fundamental movement skills should be mastered and motor development emphasized, while the participation in many sports/activities is encouraged. For optimal skill acquisition, the basic hockey skills of skating and puck control are introduced. FUN competitions are also introduced in a team environment.

#### 8 & Under (Mites):

50-60 ice sessions  
2-3 on-ice/1 off-ice sessions/week  
50-60 minute ice sessions  
9-12 skaters per team  
0 full-time goalies  
34-40 quality practices  
16-20 cross-ice game days

### Learn to Train

#### Ages 8-11 Female

#### Ages 9-12 Male

This is the period of accelerated learning of coordination and fine motor control and is the critical stage for the acquisition of hockey skills.

Prior to the beginning of the growth spurt, players have the best opportunity to learn and begin to master fine motor skills that can be used in combination with other skills. In most cases what is learned or not learned in this stage will have a very significant effect on the level of play that is achieved later on.

Players should be able to begin to transfer skills and concepts from practices to games. Group interaction, team building and social activities should be emphasized. A balance of practices and games will promote the continued development and mastery of key hockey skills.

#### 10 & Under (Squirts):

95-100 ice sessions  
3-4 on-ice/2 off-ice sessions/week  
60 minute ice sessions  
10-12 skaters and 1 goalie  
75-80 quality practices  
20-25 game days

#### 12 & Under (Peewees):

105-120 ice sessions  
4 on-ice/2 off-ice sessions/week  
60+ minute ice sessions  
12 skaters and 2 goalies  
80-90 quality practices  
30-35 game days

### Train to Train

#### Ages 11-15 Female

#### Ages 12-16 Male

The focus of this stage is to further develop sports specific skills, begin to introduce competition, and start to emphasize support training to continue development of speed, strength and stamina while maintaining flexibility.

Players should consolidate sport specific technical skills with an increased emphasis on hockey and a reduction in the number of other sports played. A continued emphasis is also placed on the development of individual and group tactics. Social and emotional considerations are addressed by placing an emphasis on team-building, group interaction and social activities.

#### 14 & Under (Bantam) & 16 & Under (Midget):

160 ice sessions  
4-5 ice sessions per week  
80 minute ice sessions  
Combined and separate practices for team/position  
9 month training calendar  
16 skaters and 2 goalies  
120-130 quality practices  
40-50 games  
Appropriate off-ice training for LTAD stage

### Learn to Compete

#### Ages 15-18 Female

#### Ages 16-18 Male

This is the time to prepare athletes for the competitive environment, continue to refine technical skills, ancillary skills and develop the physical attributes.

The focus is on optimizing fitness preparation and to begin to specialize in ice hockey. Training should be individualized to the athlete's particular needs in skill development, mental preparation, fitness and recovery. During this stage, training volume will increase, as does training intensity. Competitions become more important and the focus shifts to performance. Training will stress the development of position specific technical and tactical skills under competitive conditions. Mental skills that contribute to performance are also emphasized.

#### 18 & Under (Midget) & 19 & Under (Female):

200 ice sessions  
5-6 ice sessions per week  
80 minute ice sessions  
Combined and separate practices for team/position  
10 month training calendar  
18 skaters and 2 goalies  
130-140 quality practices  
50-60 games  
Appropriate off-ice training for LTAD stage

### Train to Compete

#### Ages 19-21 Female

#### Ages 19-23 Male

The objective of the Train to Compete stage is to transfer from the training environment to a competitive environment. Athletes must consolidate technical skills, and maintain ancillary skills and underlying physical capacities. During this stage training volume remains high while intensity increases with the importance of competitions. The training is usually 10+ months of the year and is disciplined and hockey-specific. Athletes will usually be required to move away from home for training and competition environments that fit this level of athlete development. The training is individualized to the athlete's particular needs in skill development, mental preparation, fitness and recovery.

#### Junior, NCAA:

Training calendar that equally supports both training and competition.

### Train to Win

#### Ages 19+ Female

#### Ages 19+ Male

The focus of this stage is the stabilization of performance on demand characteristics and excellence within the highest level of performance at the NHL, World Championships and Olympics. This is the final phase of athletic preparation that only a very small minority will achieve. Maturation is complete and all the performance factors should be fully established to optimize performance in national or international competitions. The athletes in this stage will be the performers in the highest level professional league and at the highest international level. It is important to build a winning strategy with these athletes, and to individualize training and recovery programs to prevent over-training.

#### NCAA, Professional:

Appropriate training that supports competition calendar.