

AHA Placement Overview

Purpose

- The purpose of this document is to offer an overview of the placement process and document best practices that can be memorialized for future members.
- By putting the process in writing, the process becomes more transparent and less confusing for those with varying degrees of involvement with the process.
- It will also hopefully clarify and address potential gray areas that may arise.
- Hopefully, lessons learned and best practices can also be incorporated to continually try and improve what is **inherently an imperfect and subjective task.**

Placement Overview

The placement process consists primarily of three phases:

- Coaches Rankings
- Evaluations
- Team Formation

Placement Overview

Coaches Rankings

- All HC and AC rank players by game impact and place players in 3 tranches (A, B, C) to distinguish recognizable breaks in ability.

Evaluations

- Evaluations are on ice evaluations where all players from an age group are evaluated against each other to determine rankings from top to bottom. Although coaches rankings provide player rankings for their team, **they do not provide comparisons between teams.**

Team Formation

- Teams are formed based on the final rankings in placements based on the targeted number of players for each age group.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Placement Committee (TPC)** – responsible for verifying final rankings for the age group and coordinating activities with lead evaluators and evaluators. Provide input on team formation.
- **Age Directors** – responsible for confirming the averaging the coaches' rankings and providing final team rankings to TPC
- **Lead Evaluator** – responsible for managing the evaluators, final rankings of the age group and documenting the process
- **Evaluators** – responsible for evaluating and ranking groups of players on the ice
- **Coaches** – Coaches are responsible for completing the player rankings and player comments

Managing Conflicts of Interests

AHA is dedicated to making the process fair and unbiased without intervention from parents and coaches. It is important to understand safeguards and best practices to minimize conflicts of interest. The following steps are put in place to minimize these inherent conflicts:

1. All Evaluators (Lead and team) cannot have any of their own children in their age group.
2. Evaluators should conduct “blind” evaluations and not be told which team the players played for previously. Only the Lead Evaluator should know the current team of players being evaluated.
3. Coaches Rankings – coaches and assistant coaches cannot rank their own children.
4. Coaches and assistant coaches independently submit their team rankings to the placement committee.
5. Age directors confirm and verify the average rankings of HC and AC provided by TPC

Evaluation Process

- The evaluation process is essentially a trial and error system where you have a set of assumptions (rankings) and you have 3 or 4 “Evaluations” to test and refine those rankings.
- You have some “knowns” which are the coaches rankings. You also have “unknowns” which are how players from other teams compare to each other.
- The system should start broadly to allow for the movement and fair evaluation of player talent. This is to avoid players being “pigeon-holed” or “stuck” at a certain level despite having improved at a faster rate than other players.

Coaches' Rankings

- Coaches' rankings and comments are the most important component to the placement process. Players have the ability to move up (or down) during the Evaluations but they generally cannot “pass” teammates with a higher ranking (unless the lead evaluator and his/her team believe strongly that a player is ranked incorrectly, in which case the coaches will be consulted by the lead evaluator).
- Rankings include a ranking by player impact from the most impactful to the least; and tranches of A, B, C
- Tranches of A, B and C levels to demonstrate meaningful splits between groups of players within the same team. A players tend to stand out as the best players on the team. B players are typically average contributors. C players have least game impact and are noticeably less skilled than the average player. Coaches rankings do not have to have a set number of A, B and C players although the B tranche is typically the largest.
- Goalies – If only 1 goalie on the team, coaches should provide accurate commentary.

Best Practices for Lead Evaluators

- Assemble a team of 4 – 8 head / assistant coaches that know either the younger / older players in the age group
- Attempt to see at least 1 Valley or Middlesex League game for each team that has players in or moving into your age group
- Pay attention to the goalies in the Valley or Middlesex League game and gather information about the goalies from the HC/AC
- Attend any age-level jamborees with your evaluator team

Evaluation Process for Lead Evaluators


1. Review the initial rankings of players from top to bottom (1 to XX) as provided by the Age Director
2. Segment players into approximately 4 groups (colors) of 8 players for a total of 32 players on the ice using methods on next slide from broad to narrow.
3. Review the rankings and make slight adjustments to maximize player matchups—it is very important to minimize the number of players from the same team & especially the same tranche competing. Ideally, you will have 4 or more different tranches as well as first and second year players competing from different teams. **This is the critical step of the process!**
4. Re-order alphabetically for pinnie #s. Once the lead evaluator has the groups, please reorder alphabetically and provide colors / pinnie #s to the check-in volunteers. This is important so that parents and players do not “read into” the process which can be unduly stressful and set unrealistic expectations.

Evaluation Process for Lead Evaluators

5. Have 1 (or ideally 2) evaluators rank their color of 6-8 players from 1 to 8 and use A, B and C to delineate when there is a noticeable difference in abilities between players.
6. Lead Evaluator adds “competition notes” in excel for each player after each tryout session. For example, if player X beat out 5 players and lost to 2; document which players were above and below him/her. These notes will become very helpful as you look back over the process and try and re-rank the list.
7. Lead Evaluator reviews the rankings and re-ranks the entire list from top to bottom based on tryout #1. LE must maintain the coaches’ rankings from each team (players from the same team will still be ranked in the order of the coaches’ rankings , although players from other teams may be between them). This is a very time consuming process if done correctly.
8. Continually repeat steps 1-6 while making the groupings going from broad to narrow explained on the next slide.

Evaluation 1 – Use a 4 player “spread” in making the 4 groups

Initial Player Rankings	Group Red	Group Yellow	Group Green	Group Blue
1	1	2	3	4
2	5	6	7	8
3	9	10	11	12
4	13	14	15	16
5	17	18	19	20
6	21	22	23	24
7	25	26	27	28
8	29	30	31	32
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
XX				



You now have the “top players” competing with a wide variety of players to test what the A, B and C tranches from various teams will mean. It is very important that the lead evaluator still review and make slight adjustments to the above if it leads to better matchups between different teams and tranches of players.

Evaluation 2 – Use a 2 player “spread” in making the 4 groups

Post Tryout 1

Rankings

	Group Red	Group Yellow	Group Green	Group Blue
1	1	2	17	18
2	3	4	19	20
3	5	6	21	22
4	7	8	23	24
5	9	10	25	26
6	11	12	27	28
7	13	14	29	30
8	15	16	31	32
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
XX				

The competition has narrowed but you still have a 15 player spread from the top to bottom of each category.

Tryout 3 – Use a 1 player “spread” in making the 4 groups

Post Tryout 2

Rankings	Group Red	Group Yellow	Group Green	Group Blue
1	1	9	17	25
2	2	10	18	26
3	3	11	19	27
4	4	12	20	28
5	5	13	21	29
6	6	14	22	30
7	7	15	23	31
8	8	16	24	32
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
XX				

This is the most narrow possible spread and the lead evaluator should adjust if necessary. Note that other than the 1st group, you will have serious competition for where the lines will be drawn between teams.

On Ice Evaluation Tips

- Each evaluation should have the following components:
 - Skating drills full ice
 - Full ice 1 on 1s
 - Battle Drills
 - Scrimmage (4 v 4 and 5 v 5)
- Have on ice coaches keep the players in the same color together. You are not evaluating color versus color but ranking players in one color from 1-8.
- Evaluators can easily rank 6 players, 8 is doable, more than 8 players is difficult for 1 hour.

Team Formation

- Placement Committee should form teams based on the final rankings provided by Lead Evaluators

Targeted Team Sizes

- Mites
 - 8 to 10 players and 0 goalies
- Squirts
 - 11 to 13 players and 1 goalies
- Peewees
 - 12 to 14 players and 2 goalies
- Bantams
 - 14 to 16 players and 2 goalies

Team Formation – Best Practices

- Assume that you will lose some players in each age group once placements are announced.
- Make the bottom team or teams slightly larger because you can move players up but not down once teams are announced.

Player Positions

- At the Bantam / U14 Level, players will be asked to register as a forward / defenseman or both.
- Player position will be used as a secondary consideration so that the teams are not left unbalanced.

Out of town players (boys only)

- Players from other towns are allowed to play in the AHA, under certain circumstances
- However, during team formation, Mass hockey rules must be adhered to so that no more than 3 out of town players can be on a single team. This means that an out of town player could be impacted as to which team he is placed on.
- This rule applies only for boys/co-ed age groups
- Please note, not all players who aren't from Andover are considered "out of town players. For example, if the player's home town does not offer a hockey program, the player is not an "out of town" player.
- Out-of-town players joining AHA for the first time (at the Mite through Bantam level) should be encouraged to play for their own town team. In this scenario, Age Directors should contact the family to determine why they are registering in the AHA for the first time. If there is no valid reason, the Age Director should reach out to that town's Board to make sure it is ok that the player is trying out with Andover. This will promote goodwill across towns.

Alternates Policy

Summary of Alternate Policy

- Cost - \$700 per year
- Playing Time – All practices; games as needed
- Evaluations – Required to be placed on a team
- Refunds – NO REFUNDS for alternates at any time

*Please refer to the AHA Website for the complete alternates policy

FAQs

1. Should any preference be given to 2nd year players trying to make a team?

A: No, other than if you have 2 players in a “tie” situation. The tie should go to the second year player.

2. Can a first year player make the top team?

A: Yes. Placements is based on each player’s ability.

3. Can players be moved down from one year to the next?

A: Yes, sometimes the number of players in an age division expands which results in a player moving down due to the increased competition.

4. How many evaluations should there be? A: It depends on the number of players in the age group and can range from 2 to 4.

5. What happens if a player cannot make evaluations?

A: He/She will be placed on a team based on their coaches ranking.

6. My player is a on a lower team. Is he/she stuck there?

A: No. Top ranked players on every team have the most upward mobility and will be competing with players that were on higher teams.

7. I have a set of twins. How are they handled?

A: Parents have the option of having them compete independently. Otherwise, they will be placed according to the lower placed child.