



# BEST PRACTICES

FOR VANCOUVER MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION PROGRAMMING



# PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

Vancouver Minor Hockey Association is a community-based hockey program designed to keep the youth of our neighborhoods active and involved in sport. VMHA is a volunteer driven association that relies on over 100 dedicated people to implement the 13 hockey programs we offer for our over 500 participants.

With so many people assisting in part time roles outside of their field of expertise it is important to share as much information as possible to ensure programs are run consistently and to the highest level possible. We value our volunteers above else and we want to provide the tools necessary to make sure they feel empowered to make the VMHA experience the best it could possibly be for all members.

This document is the backbone to these programs and should be used as a template for what we want to provide as members move through from U6-U21. It is a guide for best practice and should be considered when running VMHA programs.



# GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

Hockey is a dynamic sport with many nuances and details change as players move through a periodized program. That being said there are some consistencies that should be followed when teaching at any level. In the keeping with this document it is important to lay the foundation and help our volunteers with these standard guidelines.

## **HAVE FUN:**

In all our programs we need to remember that the first priority is to provide a positive and safe environment for all participants. That includes: players, coaches, referees, managers and all stakeholders associated. Please keep this at the forefront of everything you do with VMHA.

## **PARTICIPANTS ARE THERE TO BE ACTIVE:**

We all want players to get the most out of every practice and absorb as much information as possible. However after safety and fun the next most important factor in a successful session is how much time a participant spends moving and doing. Limit talking time on the board, use station based training, ensure work to rest ratio is limited and utilize all personnel to maximize the amount of time players are participating in drills.

## **POSITIVE FEEDBACK IS THE BEST TOOL:**

When teaching a new skill or behaviour it is always better to celebrate success rather than to use corrective or negative feedback. This can be difficult to achieve when there is so much to learn and many mistakes are occurring. All behaviour or skills should be set up with how to do it correctly and then followed through with positive feedback when it is performed correctly. At its core this is what coaching/teaching is. Obviously we are all going to be corrective or constructive at points but work on building the trust with all players by celebration their victories no matter the size.

## **MATCH SKILL LEVEL:**

In competitive situations players should be matched to skill level. This isn't to say that players are type cast or not allowed to compete against others with different skill level but players learn from optimal challenge. If competition is too easy then a player will not be challenged enough. If competition is too hard then a player won't have the same opportunity to develop and learn.

## **STRUCTURE:**

It's important to have a strong game plan to follow, and frontload your players with what to expect throughout each practice. It is also helpful to have consistent rules and routines. If you are strongly organized, the kids will know what to do and be more able to follow your instructions.

## **COMMUNICATION:**

Keep things as simple and concise as possible. Regardless of age, too much talking can be overwhelming. Pairing your instructions with a visual like modeling it, showing videos, or drawing it out also helps players understand what you are asking them to do.

## **POSITIVELY STATED EXPECTATIONS:**

When dealing with behavioural issues, remember to tell your players what you expect them to do, rather than what not to do. Never assume they know what to do.



# TIPS AND TRICKS

As part of managing a group of youth there are numerous “cheats” that can be used to help run multiple individuals through a practice. These don’t work all the time but can be a tool to help move the players through the practice in effective manner. This list is not limited to the below but use these hints to help you organize your squad.

## **WHISTLES:**

Define whistle signals and what they mean. Whistles are a tool for you to communicate to the group. Explain what you want from the group when a whistle is used. Ex: A single long whistle with my stick in the air means come in and take a knee for more instruction.

## **KNOW THEIR NAMES:**

Call players by their individual name when asking them to do something. Especially if they did not respond to a group command.

## **TAKING A KNEE:**

Have players take a knee while explaining drills. This helps keep the players attention on the task at hand and helps them maintain focus on the instructor.

## **RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE:**

Use please and thank you when asking anything of anyone. A little courtesy goes along way. By showing players that you respect them and value what they are doing it helps build rapport.

## **TRANSITIONING ACTIVITIES:**

Have a plan for transitioning drills: direct players to get water, tell them where to meet the next instructor, have assistants set up and keep pucks organized and give explicit direction on what is required of participants.

## **COACHING AIDS:**

Use coaching tools to help guide the players through the drills. Cones, sticks, pucks, markers and coaches can be used to help players move through patterns on the ice. They can also help players stay organized and minimize confusion.

## **INDIVIDUAL FEEDBACK:**

One of the hardest things to do when coaching is to give all individual your time and energy. Use drill explanations as an overview and how you want something performed. Then take the time to interact with all players on a one to one basis even if for 10 seconds to provide specific feedback for learning and building rapport.

## **GIVE ASSISTANTS CLEAR ROLES:**

Everybody is at the rink to participate. By clearly defining assistant coaches roles and responsibilities at practices and games helps engage them to be more involved. This can also lead to them taking more ownership of that aspect of the team.



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[HOCKEY CANADA PLAYER DEVELOPMENT DOWNLOADS](#)

[HOCKEY CANADA SMALL AREA GAMES AND STATIONS](#)

[HOCKEY CANADA OFF ICE TRAINING](#)

[HOCKEY CANADA DRILL HUB](#)

[THE COACHES SITE](#)

[COACHTHEM](#)

[OMHA COACHES AND PLAYERS RESOURCES](#)

[USA HOCKEY AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL](#)

[HOW TO HOCKEY THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE GUIDE FOR HOCKEY COACHES](#)