



Minor Hockey Development Guide

Initiation Program – Implementation Guide



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“ DEVELOPING SKILLS FIRST “



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The Initiation Program is part of the Hockey Canada Skill Development Series - The Official Hockey Instructional Curriculum of Hockey Canada

The Association's Responsibilities

Who enrolls in the Initiation Program and why?

The Hockey Canada Initiation Program is designed for players 5 and 6 years old but is suitable for any entry level hockey player and clearly lays out how to get them started in hockey so that they will:

- have fun,
- learn skills,
- and develop confidence

The local association must take a commitment to the Initiation Program and then be prepared to support it.

The commitment involves making an informed decision to implement it and then having the courage to stick with it until it is an accepted way of doing things and begins to produce players and coaches.

Because it is a different program from those normally offered, with learning being emphasized as opposed to playing, *(while playing is not necessarily eliminated) there are bound to be doubters and those who favour a more traditional approach. The association must realize this and be prepared to deal with it, and not lose sight of the fact that the program has been designed for the children, not adults.

Growing pains are normal in any new program and when both the participants and most of the instructors are likely to be inexperienced, the program implementation is not going to be as smooth as one would like. However, with commitment, patience and support the results will come and in most cases exceed everyone's expectations.

Support must come in a number of sources and from a variety of people. Again bearing in mind that the majority of people delivering this program will be relatively inexperienced it is essential that the organization lends support in the following ways:

- To identify and recruit volunteers to manage and run the programs.
A ratio of 1 volunteer per 5 participants is probably ideal.
- Provide training and support to the administrative personnel, through information sessions and the appointment of an experienced administrator.
Don't leave them to administer the program for themselves, nor should they be expected to know how to.



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- Provide training and support for the technical personnel (the instructors) beyond the Initiation Program Clinic.
An experienced technical person or committee to advise and conduct follow up training is essential. Preferably someone with experience in developing and delivering such programs.
- Communications between the Initiation Program and other areas of the association should be open.
Remember these people are the future of your association.
- A strategy must be developed to sell the program to the parents. Get them on your side.
Options include information sessions, newsletters, evaluations.

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Leadership is the key in the Initiation Program just as it is in any of the other cooperative hockey program. In addition to developing player's hockey skills and promoting physical fitness. Instructors are responsible for encouraging initiative, stimulating interest in the sport and instilling a desire for continued success.

Because the Initiation Program deals with entry level players which may contain children **who have not even entered the school system, the need for quality leadership is critical.** For some of the children the IP may be the very first time they have attended an organized event outside the home. Therefore. The IP instructor may be the first authoritative figure, other than the parent, that the child encounters.

Again, because of the fact that they are dealing with entry level players, instructors and other volunteers will have to be positive, energetic, creative, fun-loving and above all, patient. The IP instructors course will emphasize many of the attributes necessary to conduct the program successfully. It certainly is not necessary that the potential instructors have previous experience in teaching hockey skills, although that would certainly would be a bonus. At the beginning level, on-ice instructors may range from an interested parent who offers to come out in street shoes to offer encouragement to a seasoned instructor who can demonstrate the skills covered in the manuals.

Associations must be innovative in their recruitment of IP volunteers. The IP can be a grooming area for the association's future coaches as well as players. Following are some proven common sense ideas on volunteer recruitment. These ideas plus a few of your own may be the key to making your program a success.



THE THREE KEY ROLES FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

No matter where you recruit the volunteers necessary to conduct a successful Initiation Program, a strong nucleus of volunteers is essential. The Initiation Program recognizes the need for a number of roles to be filled to effectively operate the program and deliver the curriculum. However, in a number of minor hockey associations, a single individual may be able to fill one or more roles.

The basic framework or structure of the personnel required to implement the IP is not very complex. The IP requires three key roles to be filled by individuals:

- **Program Convenor or Administrator**
- **Technical Coordinator or Head Instructor**
 - **Group Instructors (on-ice)**

With these roles filled by individuals from within your minor hockey association, and by participating in the training sessions offered by the Branch, as well as receiving the support of your branch, you and your minor hockey association are on the way to staging a very positive and fun filled learning experience for beginning hockey players in your community. Each of these individuals have a specific role to play in the delivery of the IP; each somewhat distinct, yet, interdependent upon each to achieve a successful program.

The PROGRAM CONVENER or ADMINISTRATOR

An Initiation Program's convenor is directly responsible for overseeing the implementation and delivery for the IP. This volunteer plans, organizes, and administers the IP for the minor hockey association. The program convenor may be an executive member of the minor hockey association or may simply be the liaison to the association's executive. This position is directly responsible to report directly to the minor hockey association's board of directors.

The convenor has a number of responsibilities to fulfil which require a number of administrative skills. Some of the duties of the Program Convenor may include budgeting, liaising with the minor hockey association's executive, recruitment and placement of instructors, organizing the instructors' clinic, coordinating the evaluation of the program, undertaking special events and recommending changes to the program and its delivery. He or she must work closely with the Technical Coordinator, and thus it is wise to select people for these two roles who both complement one another and who are capable of working together.



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The qualifications within a typical recruitment advertisement for a convener may contain the following requirements:

- **Understand the fundamental elements of the Initiation Program**
- **Possess a commitment to the established goals of the IP**
- **Possess strong organizational, interpersonal and communication skills**
- **Have the ability to conduct group presentations**
- **Have the ability to liaise with volunteers, board members, administrators, instructors and parents**
- **Has demonstrated ability to provide adequate time to the delivery of the IP**
- **Has an enthusiastic attitude working with parents, administrators and youngsters**

Convener / Administrator Job Description

A typical job description for the program convener/administrator may contain these responsibilities (some may be shared with the Technical Coordinator, if there is one):

PRE-SEASON

- work with the minor hockey association's board of directors to have the IP sanctioned within the association, whether it be through a formal change to the association's constitution or through a general commitment to undertake the IP. This may entail obtaining information from the branch, conducting an information session for the minor hockey association's board of directors, parents and other interested individuals;
- prepare a preliminary operating budget for review and adoption by the minor hockey association's board. This budget may contain estimates for expenditures and revenues for:
 - ice rental
 - equipment (pucks, pylons, instructor warm-up suits, whistles, etc.)
 - supplies (paper, pens, envelopes, binders, lesson manuals, etc.)
 - training fees (to conduct instructor training sessions)
 - room rentals (to conduct meetings)
 - promotion supplies (posters, photocopying, pamphlets, VHS tapes)
 - advertising (in local media vehicles)
 - first aid supplies and kits
 - instructor recognition (certificates, etc.)
 - sponsorship
- preparation of a preliminary ice schedule for lessons and/or mini-games
- secure appropriate ice time in conjunction with the minor hockey association
- preparation and implementation of recruitment procedures for participants, instructors and head instructors
- co-ordinate the registration of participants
- assist in the selection and training of head instructor(s)
- co-ordinate the scheduling of an IP INSTRUCTORS CLINIC in conjunction with the minor hockey association & the branch. This component should include the confirmation of dates of the clinic, location, time frames, fees, rentals (room, audio-visual, etc.), availability of instructional material, etc.
- conduct a PARENT ORIENTATION MEETING to familiarize parents of prospective participants with the objectives of the IP, and how it is to be implemented in the association (Administrators Workshop Presentation)



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ON-ICE DELIVERY

- co-ordinate the initial evaluation of participants for the purpose of grouping in the appropriate skill level
- confirm arena facilities / schedule and provide copies to all parties
- Liaise with the minor hockey association's board, the IP Technical Coordinator and/or Head Instructor and on-ice instructors, the parents of the participants
- co-ordinate special events (photo sessions, mini-games, etc.);

POST SEASON

- prepare a report for the minor hockey association's board which may contain information on the association's Instructor training session, participant/parent evaluation and statistics on the number participants and gender
- submit recommendations to the board of the minor hockey association with respect to any changes that could be made to improve the IP
- prepare equipment and supplies for storage
- undertake necessary actions for preparation for the next season

IP ON-ICE INSTRUCTOR

The on-ice instructors of the minor hockey association's program are generally recruited from the participants' moms and dads. In some situations. The on-ice instructors may also be volunteers from other segments of the community including students (a minimum of 16 years of age), post-secondary students and other adult volunteers. (See the section on recruiting).

This position entails the delivery of the IP curriculum on the ice to the participants as scheduled by the program's Convenor.

The qualifications within a typical recruitment advertisement may contain the following requirements:

- possess a coaching and/or hockey background OR a strong desire to begin to learn instructional techniques in the delivery of fundamental ice hockey skills
- possess an enthusiastic attitude and desire to work with beginning hockey players
- possess strong communication skills
- possess a commitment to the goals and philosophy of the IP



On Ice Instructor Job Description

A typical job description for On-ice Instructors may contain these responsibilities:

PRE-SEASON

- successfully complete the association's instructor's session
- successfully participate in the supplementary training sessions as co-ordinated by the minor hockey association

ON-ICE DELIVERY

- deliver the program's curriculum to the assigned groups
- arrive at the ice rink approximately 30 minutes prior to the ice session
- exemplify fair play and co-operation,
- provide instruction in a manner that motivates and challenges the participants while respecting each individual
- demonstrate effective leadership on and off the ice, for example, providing effective feedback to the participants
- provide feedback to parents of the participants
- assist in the evaluation of the participants and the IP in general
- demonstrate necessary risk management skills at all times by assisting the head instructor with the arena safety checklist at each ice session
- assist the Head Instructor in assigning players to their respective groups
- ensure practice schedule is respected
- explain and demonstrate drills and games to the participants;
- co-ordinate the orderly entrance and exit to/from the ice surface by the participants
- utilize the appropriate equipment for the lesson plan; pick-up all equipment prior to leaving the ice surface



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The writings of the Initiation Program are really a curriculum of skill development designed to introduce the beginning players to the skills of the game of hockey. One of the keys to running a successful Initiation Program is to build this curriculum into a complete seasonal plan.

The idea of building a seasonal plan around the curriculum of the Initiation Program is a task, which must be done at the minor hockey level. Obviously, the seasonal plan for an association with 400 players in the Initiation Program will differ considerably from that of a community association having only 15 players.

The local constraints of the program will all play a role in the unique design of an association's seasonal plan. These are considerations such as:

- association size
- allotted ice time
- number of instructors
- age levels of hockey entry
- numbers of entry level players

Even the surrounding communities may play a role in your program design. For example, a small community situated near a large one will be dependent on the large association if, in the later stages of the program, introduction to playing an opponent is sought. The large association could run a totally "in house" program but must be sensitive to the effect this would have on their smaller neighbour.

Every association building an Initiation Program will have it's own unique design. The goal, however, is the commonality of using the curriculum of the Initiation Program and it's teaching strategies to build a strong foundation of skills which will allow players to enjoy hockey for a lifetime.

Because of the parameters dictating the local program, it is impossible to tell someone how they must run the Initiation Program. However, over the beginning years of using the curriculum, a number of very good models have emerged. This section of the manual will examine some of the designs being implemented by associations across the country. Again, these models may not fit your particular conditions but they could be used as ideas to either modify or start your Initiation Program.

It is hoped that this section of the manual will be constantly changing with the addition of new, innovative models, this section is not theoretical! The compilation of ideas comes from people across the country who are actually running the Initiation Program. They



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have taken the time to document their ideas, to share them and to build better programs for entry level players.

Before explicit examples are given, we have attempted to:

- categorize different ways of grouping the children in the Initiation Program
- categorize ways of introducing the game of hockey to children in the IP.

GROUPING PLAYERS

Most of the ideas on grouping players come from two main designs.

We have named them "**Program Design**" and "**Team Design**".

PROGRAM DESIGN

In this design, players are kept as one large group and treated/instructed as a whole. In large associations, the "whole" may mean players working out of the "A" manual only - all on the ice at the same time, "B"s on the ice at the same time, etc., etc.

This model is characterized by instructors being responsible for all the players in the program rather than only a pre-selected number. Instructors may be responsible for station work involving their areas of expertise. During the session the instructors would instruct all the players as they moved through his/her station.

Minor "team" games or scrimmages would take place with a random selection of players. These "teams" would constantly change.

The benefits of this design are:

- all players receive equal instruction from a variety of instructors
- players get to associate with a maximum number of other players on the ice.
- instructors have a narrow range of ability to deal with, making it easier for them to give instruction

Associations may choose to conduct this design with all players of approximately the same skill level being on the ice at the same time (thus working out of the same Manual) OR a mixture of skill levels who use station work to attend to the appropriate curriculum (groups working out of different Manuals). The latter scenario is a perfect design for a small community that has no choice in delivering a diverse curriculum to suit all their player's abilities.



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Some associations can accommodate in excess of 60 players on the ice at one time using this program design. Games like British Bulldog would be run with the entire group and station work would attend to the curriculum.

TEAM DESIGN

In this design, an instructor or group of instructors is assigned a number of players (a "team") in the early part of the season. The instructional group would then be responsible for conducting the Initiation Program curriculum to their group of players. This design may lead to situations where these player groups are identifiable by the same colour sweaters and play minor games or scrimmages against different colours. The player groups would, for the most part, be intact for the season. Ice schedules may have a number of these "player groups" on the ice at the same time but when attending to the curriculum, the players are instructed by the same instructor.

Example: A simple model would be 45 players on the ice with groups of 15 dressed in green, yellow and red. After warming up together, the 15 yellow players would be instructed at their end of the rink by "their" instructor (as would the other colours).

The benefits of this design are:

- player groups are much easier to organize.
- players form a more intimate identity to a smaller group.
- players receive consistent instruction from their identifiable leader(s).
- easy transfer into mainstream hockey where this player group becomes a "team."

As you read the two formulas just presented, you can probably imagine a number of designs that would be a combination of the two models. As with many of the ideas presented, the options must be thought of as a continuum, rather than one or the other. In this case, the two ends of the continuum are Program and Team. You might choose some midway design. For example:

Program Design <----->Team Design



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Option A

Your association may also choose to operate a Program Design with 1st year players and progress to Team Design as players ready for entry into mainstream hockey. This is actually a common practice (players working on the A Manual curriculum treated as Program and players in the B curriculum treated as Teams).

Option B

Program Design could be used for the early part of the season, and then at a suitable time players could be regrouped into team groups. The transition could be made at different times for different groups, depending on age and/or ability.

Program Models

Following are 4 program models that can be used as models for any association that implements the Initiation Program. They can be used for associations with 20 kids up to 400 kids, and can be adapted to meet the requirements of each individual association. Keep in mind these models are guidelines, but have been used successfully by many associations.

Each association, depending upon the number of kids, ages of the kids and skill level can progress through each model, or apply the various models to the categories with in their own initiation age levels.

Model A

Objective	:Emphasis on fun and skill development.
Curriculum	:"A" Manual skills and review.
League	:Scoreboard is not used and there are no league standings.
Teams	:Smaller ability groups within the large group (12 - 14 players in each)
Age	:Generally 5 years old, in their first or second year of hockey.
Ice	:Full ice for up to 40-45 players at a time. Most sessions end with short scrimmage games.
Instruction	:IP instructors utilizing integrated station approach.
Miscellaneous	:different colour schemes. No full ice games. No travel. Fun day concludes season. (Festival)



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Model B

Objective	:Emphasis on fun and skill development
Curriculum	:“A” Manual - skills and review
League	:Scoreboard is not used and there are no league standings.
Teams	:Minimum of 3 with a maximum of 12-14 players
Age	:Generally 5 - 6 years old, in their second or third year of hockey
Ice	:Full ice, up to 30 kids per practice. Min. 4 practices to 1 game.
Instruction	:IP instructors utilizing integrated station approach.
Miscellaneous	:Before Christmas utilize 1/2 ice pond hockey. Minimal full ice games after Christmas.

Model C

Objective	:Emphasis on fun and skill development. Introduce team.
Curriculum	:” A and B “ Manuals - skills and review.
League	:Scoreboard is used and but there are no league standings.
Teams	:Minimum of 4 with a maximum of 12-14 players
Age	:Generally 5 - 6 years old, in their second or third year of hockey.
Instruction	:IP instructors utilizing station approach and full ice drills.
Miscellaneous	:Dressed goalies on a rotational basis. Introduction of referees. Equal opportunity for all teams to attend one out of town tournament and exhibition games.

Model D

Objective	:Emphasis on fun and skill development. Continue team introduction.
Curriculum	:” B ” Manual - skills plus review.
League	:Scoreboard is used and but there are no league standings.
Teams	:Minimum of 4 with a maximum of 14 players each.
Age	:Generally 6 years old, in their second or third year of hockey.
Ice	:Full ice, 2-3 teams per practice. 3 practices to 1 game ratio.
Instruction	:IP instructors utilizing station approach and full ice drills. Strongly suggest attaining Coach Level.
Miscellaneous	:Dressed goalies on a rotational basis. Referees for games.



INTRODUCING THE GAME

You can see by the way the skills are presented in the Initiation Program, that a player progresses from individual skills to skills involving more than one player. For example, passing - the first rudiments of a team game is introduced in lesson A-12 after individual skills of skating and puck handling are introduced. Along with the instructional component, "fun times" introduce the concept of a hockey game as early as A-5 in the form of a modified pond hockey game.

In line with introducing the cooperative skills of the game over the years of a child's involvement in the Initiation Program, they experience an introduction to playing the game of hockey (or a modified version).

Again, as was mentioned in the previous section on player grouping, think of the Initiation Program as a continuum rather than "one day the IP stops and hockey begins." Consider that a group of 4 year olds with limited individual skills are certainly capable of batting a puck to see if they can "score" in an open net and a Midget AAA team could very easily run a B Manual lesson plan as practice.

Ways of introducing the game of hockey are inherent in the Lesson plans. However, if we work from the premise that the curriculum is an integral part of the seasonal plan - not the seasonal plan - then there are other opportunities to introduce the game to the participants. Here then, are some excellent models which have been produced by people using the Initiation Program. These, in combination with the curriculum, produce a well rounded and sound introduction to hockey.

With this said, our final caution would be to remember that the goal of the Initiation Program is to introduce hockey through fun, development of basic skills and confidence building. If not monitored, it is very easy to slip into a game model where participants are forced into competition that's too demanding too soon. If this happens not enough time is spent attending to the curriculum of skill development - leaving the players without the skill foundation to enjoy hockey for a lifetime.

In the models, it appears as though players can proceed through 3 levels of "introduction to the game." As you will see in the presentations of models, there are different ways of dividing the ice or grouping players but players all progress through 3 common stages as follows.



THE THREE STAGES OF A HOCKEY PROGRAM

1) Curriculum Stage

In the initial stages, players attend only to the curriculum. When fun time is scheduled in the curriculum, the children are randomly split and minor games resembling hockey are played (example; the minor game in Lesson A-5 where 10 minutes are dedicated to "playing hockey" using a tennis ball to hit a pylon). Very few, if any, rules are explained. All players are involved on the ice and very little structure exists.

2) Transition to Mainstream Hockey Stage

In this more advanced introduction to playing the game of hockey, players are continuing heavy emphasis on the curriculum but are entering a more structured game setting. This may take several variations:

- a) the curriculum is conducted on part of the ice while a scrimmage (game) is occurring in another area. In most cases, players are somehow rotated through skill instruction and scrimmage areas.
- b) players alternate ice sessions between the Initiation Program curriculum and game situations. An easy example would be: the ice divided into 2. Group A doing the Manual curriculum while Group B and C are scrimmaging. The next ice session would have Group B doing the curriculum while A and C scrimmage.
- c) the season is divided into phases where the players begin the season attending to only the curriculum which gives way to some sort of game/practice schedule (at Christmas, for example).

3) Initiation Program in Mainstream Hockey Stage

Here, players are on permanent teams with a structured league schedule. The IP curriculum is conducted during team practices, or in addition to team practices, and could be on shared ice or with a composite of teams.



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EXAMPLES OF WAYS OF MODIFYING THE GAME

Modify the Ice Surface

- play 2 ice (ice divided at the red line)
- play 2 ice (ice divided end to end line)
- play 1/3 ice (ice divided at two blue lines)
- play 2/3 ice (blue line to far end of the rink)
- play 3 ice (ice divided at the red line and down the middle - this format actually keeps the length/width proportionate)

Modify the Equipment (See section on Equipment)

- use pylons for goals
- make smaller nets
- use light pucks
- use little pro pucks
- use Junior equipment
- devise boards and benches to be used while dividing the ice
- use target or artificial goalies

Modify Players Playing the Game

- match skill strength of opposing players
- change numerical advantages (i.e. 5 "C" players vs 4 "D" players)
- change numbers playing (i.e. 3 on 3 hockey, etc)

Modify the Basic Rules

- no faceoffs
- no offside
- no statistics
- players must make a certain number of passes
- players may only score a limited number of goals
- numerical strength may not be even
- no penalties
- no referees
- use buzzer system for line changes
- player changes "on the fly" (no faceoffs)

Emphasize Skill

- players can only skate backwards
- players must only pass on the backhand
- all players rotate all positions including goal
- goals only scored on shots outside a certain radius

Instruction During the Game

- have instructors on the ice
- stop the game to instruct