

**FUNdamentals (Play to Learn, 6U & 8U)**  
**Ages 6-8 females**  
**Ages 6-9 males**



### **USA Hockey Programs**

USA Hockey member organizations offer 8 & Under, and 6 & Under programs as well as a Learn to Play program for first-year participants.

### **Objective**

Continue to develop fundamental movement skills, general athleticism, and begin to learn and acquire basic hockey skills (skating, puck control, passing and receiving, shooting, body contact, and goaltending). This is the time when a foundation is laid for future acquisition of more advanced movement abilities and hockey skills. A basic understanding of the game is also introduced, including rules and team concepts.

### **General Description of the FUNdamental stage**

- This is the stage where children continue to learn fundamental movement skills
- The skills that children acquire during this stage will benefit them when they engage in any activity or sport, regardless of their level of participation
- Basic sport skill development in this stage should provide a combination of structured and unstructured play in a positive, FUN and social environment

### **USA Hockey's key focus for this stage**

- Help ensure our participants are becoming physically literate and developing general athleticism
- Participants (kids & families) have fun, enjoy learning hockey and develop an interest for the game (keep kids & families in the game)
- Encourage participation in a variety of sports to help our children maximize their ability to reach their athletic potential
- Develop on-ice balance and coordination
- A focus on basic puck control

### **Components of Athlete Development: USA Hockey FUNdamental Stage**

#### **Technical Development**

##### Skating

- Expose kids to a variety of on-ice movements that allow children to explore the environment through games and fun activities

##### Basic Puck Control

- Learning to handle the puck confidently with their head up and perceiving their surroundings are a major focus

#### **Tactical Skills**

- Participants should engage in deliberate play and should learn basic decision-making skills through activity games like tag and small-area hockey games
- Competition at the puck – one-on-one battles and loose puck races for body positioning
- Participants should learn basic appropriate behavior within a team setting, such as how to support others and appropriate behavior in a locker room setting

#### **Physical Development**

- Children ages 6 and above should be provided opportunities and encouragement to participate in physical activities that are appropriate for their age, that are enjoyable, and

that offer variety. This should include 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily. Furthermore, muscle- and bone-strengthening physical activity on at least 3 days a week. As part of their 60 minutes or more of daily physical activity, children and adolescents should include muscle strengthening.

- Introduce fundamental movement skills and general athleticism through play and varying environments
- Encourage participation in a wide range of sports
  - *Athletics, gymnastics, swimming; ambidextrous sports for developing movement*
  - *Soccer, hockey, basketball, tennis, baseball, lacrosse for developing catching, passing, kicking, striking*
  - *Biking, skiing, dancing for developing speed, balance and coordination*
- Bilateral balance must be well developed in this stage through sliding, skating and gliding sports (skating, rollerblading, two-ski water skiing, alpine and cross country skiing)
- Off-ice training activities that provide purposeful games or activities and focused on fundamental movement skills. In addition, hockey skills can also be incorporated in off-ice stations (e.g., stickhandling).
- Include strength training using the child’s own body weight including squat, lunge, hinge, pushups, pullups, and med ball rotations
- Emphasize the overall development of the athlete’s physical capacities, fundamental movement and all aspects of athleticism; strength, power, speed, agility, balance, coordination and endurance.
- Movement in 3 planes of balance (linear, lateral, spatial & aerial)
- Develop speed, power and endurance using activity-based games and small-area hockey games – cross-ice games

<b>Locomotor Skills</b>	<b>Stability Skills</b>	<b>Manipulative Skills</b>
Walking	Balancing	Throwing
Running	Landing	Catching
Hopping	Turning	Striking
Skipping	Twisting	Kicking
Bounding	Bending	Dribbling
Leaping	Stretching	Bouncing
Jumping	Extending	Pushing
Rolling	Flexing	Pulling
Galloping	Hanging	Carrying
Sliding	Bracing	Trapping
Dodging	Rotation	Collecting

### **Psychological Development**

- Participants should learn how to listen and follow simple instructions
- Develop reasoning skills through various sports and activities
- Provide opportunities for activities that:
  - Are FUN, positive and motivating
  - Are exploratory and allow for self-discovery
  - Build confidence through a high rate of success
  - Promote individual and group participation
  - Introduce participants to simple rules and sport ethics (fair play)
- Ensure that games focus on participation

## Ancillary Skills

- Participation in other sport activities (gymnastics, public skating, alpine skiing, soccer, lacrosse, swimming)
- Participants, parents and support persons should be well informed about proper equipment for practice (equipment sizing, how to dress for training, water bottle for hydration, skate sharpening). Children should be able to dress themselves by the time they move into the 10 & Under age category.

## Lifestyle

- Key Concepts:
  - Fun
  - Safety
  - Social interaction
  - Creating a love of all sporting activities
  - Positive introduction to hockey
- Participate in hockey 2 to 3 times per week as long as there is participation in other sports or physical activities 4 to 6 times per week to help insure overall physical health
- Because girls tend to be less active than boys, ensure that activities are gender neutral and inclusive so that active living is equally valued and promoted for all
- Ensure that activities revolve around the school year and are enhanced by multi-sports though the spring, summer and winter holidays
- Healthy physical activity, eating and sleep habits should be promoted to parents and caregivers

## Monitoring

- It is helpful to keep track of annual height measurements to provide a baseline for future growth
- Assessment of fitness and athleticism for talent identification and selection of potentially 'elite' young players is highly discouraged

## Training and Competitive Environment

At this stage it is important to create a fun and engaging environment where participants want to play hockey. They need to enjoy being at the rink and learning. Play lots of fun and challenging games. Lessons must be varied; interesting and fun so participants want to come back to the rink. End each session with a game, with the goal of having everyone leave the ice with a smile on their face. It is important to build interest in our sport and to provide self-confidence and the enjoyment of performing while increasing the competency in fundamental movement skills and basic hockey skills. Keep in mind that early specialization in a late specialization sport such as hockey will not lead to greater performance later in life.

8 & Under	
Training/Competition Ratio	No formal competition
Training Volume	Formal hockey sessions two times per week. Session length no longer than 60 minutes in the Learn to Play Program. A third session at the 8 & Under level can be held for an informal competition – cross ice/half-ice games.
Total # of sessions	50-60
# Practices	50-60 practices (2 - 3 ice touches per week)
# Competitions	No formal competition (16-20 cross-ice/half-ice games)
Training Year	4 months/year (20 weeks per season)

Team Composition	Maximum of 9-13 skaters – with no specialized, full-time goalie. The goaltender position is rotated among team members. Position sampling is highly encouraged.
Team Structure	All players should be grouped throughout this age category as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Advanced</li> <li>○ Intermediate</li> <li>○ Beginner &amp; Less Skilled</li> </ul> Teams are divided into groups of equal abilities for half-ice/cross-ice competition purposes. Players should be grouped with the overall focus on evenly distributing the player ability pool across all teams.
Competition format	All competitions are held cross-ice/half-ice with the focus on skill development not outcomes. At 8 & Under, the occasional jamboree can be held as a third ice touch for the week.
Overall activity ratios	25% hockey, 75% other sports and activities including dryland to promote fundamental movement skills
Complementary Sports	Players are highly encouraged to participate in several sports and activities

## Quality Coaching

### General Considerations

- Create a positive, fun and safe environment for the players
- Encourage active participation by all players
- Be clear and precise in communication and use terminology appropriate for the age
- Limit the amount of technical or tactical information to what is appropriate for the age
- Ensure that the ice surface size is in proportion to the age – cross-ice games
- Ensure that the players have the appropriate equipment when on the ice under your supervision
- Have an organized plan for each ice session
- Provide some opportunities that guarantee success for all participants
- Become knowledgeable with regard to the physical and mental capacities, as well as the LTAD model for the age category group
- Encourage all forms of creativity
- Encourage parents and players to explore a wide range of other sports to assist in their long-term hockey development
- Include planned coordination exercises within training sessions both on and off ice

### Coach and Instructor Recommendations

- Coaches must all have the appropriate level of USA Hockey Coaching Education Program (CEP) certification and completed the following:
  - On-line coaching module for the age category being coached
  - Background check
  - Completed the United States Center for Safe Sport online program
  - Current year membership registration with USA Hockey
- Coaches need a sound knowledge of child growth and development principles for this age group; having an understanding of how to develop fundamental movement skills and basic hockey skills is also a key component for coaches at this stage

## **Equipment**

Proper sizing and fit of all equipment is essential for player safety and playing effectiveness

- Skates – must fit properly; used are fine
- Helmet and Mask
- Gloves
- Wooden Stick
- Shin Pads
- Elbow Pads
- Undergarment layers
- Protective Cup
- Hockey socks or sweat pants
- Garter belt or shorts with velcro to hold-up socks
- Hockey Pants
- Shoulder Pads – small & light weight
- Jersey