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Subject: Age-Appropriate Recommendations For Alternating Goalies

From USA Hockey Magazine, March 2020
Age-Appropriate Recommendations For Alternating Goalies
By Steve Thompson

There is no such thing as a backup goalie in youth hockey. Our job as youth hockey coaches is not to identify and play the best 12-year-old, but rather to develop all athletes on our team. The recommendations below are based upon research conducted on age appropriate training.

8 & Under – Every athlete on the team should play every position. With the new Try Goalie Gear, athletes can transition from player to goalie in around 40 seconds. This allows for playing goal in shifts instead of a full-game commitment. The new 51 in 30 Hat Trick will be a goal, an assist and a shut out all in the same game.

10 & Under – Goalies switch at the halfway point of each period. Alternate from game to game which goalie plays the first half of the period and who plays the second half. The benefits are that the coaches can now coach and communicate with the goalie after their shift. Sharing the game also has psychological benefits as it isn't as mentally taxing as playing the entire game.

12/14 & Under – Goalies switch at the halfway point of the game. Alternate which goalie starts the game and which one goes in halfway through. Flipflop who starts from game to game. This allows for the goalies to work on staying focused for longer stretches of time as they get older.

15 & Older – Goalies play full games in tournaments but still split regular-season games. Alternate which goalie would play in the championship game of the tournament, should the team make it. Play your best goalie in the postseason tournament if one has earned the starting job. If you're coaching a competitive team

it's important to teach athletes to be competitive.
A goalie who didn't earn the starting job that
season will have a full year to work on his or her
skills to try and earn the job the following league
or state tournament.

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