

Coach's Certification - Level 1

WELCOME

First and foremost, thanks! Not only does the league thank you for your decision to become a coach, but the student athletes and their parents extend their gratitude as well. You have joined a unique group of people who selflessly volunteer their time to enhance the development of players and give them the opportunity to use these skills in real situations. You're giving each of these athletes' valuable life experiences that they will draw on for years to come.

In the following sections you will read about many of the fundamentals and requirements for coaching in this league. It is important to remember that this certification isn't just another thing the league wants you to do just for the sake of reading something. This league believes that in order for the continued growth, development, and safety of the athletes and this sport we will subscribe to training and certifying that each of the coaches. Furthermore, this will allow not only the league, but its participants to expect a certain level of professionalism and consistency regardless of the venue in which this league is played.

It is safe to assume that the scope of this document cannot cover every aspect of being a coach. That is why it is only a Level 1 Course. It will however give you a basis for the expectations you will now have from your athletes, their parents/guardians, and the league. It will also allow you to draw some ideas from people who have had successful careers as coaches as much of the following information is drawn from coaches with real program/league experiences.

After completion of this course you will be presented with an online test. After successfully completing this test with 80% or better score you will be a Level 1 Certified Coach with this league and AAU. AAU is a nationally recognized athletic association which this league subscribes. You will then receive your official certification card in the mail. Also this is an open book test and you will be allowed to take it as many times as you need to pass it. The idea behind this certification process is for you to really understand the material not just pass the test.

It should be noted that the league will require that all head coaches be at least Level 1 Certified with the league and AAU. By completing the test at the end you will have accomplished this requirement. Also, the league defines "Head Coach" as the person responsible for the team on the bench during games.

Section 1 – Getting Started

For many of you this will not be your first time coaching, so the material below may seem a little redundant, but for those new to coaching here a couple of invaluable checklist items that we are going to call "must have" items. Remember this is a starting point. There might be additional items that did not make the list and there may be things that you would not have on the list (for those experienced coaches) but the point here is to give some sort launching point for new coaches.

1. Assistant Coach(s)/Parent Committee/Volunteers – Even though this will be discussed further this is an essential starting point for any new program. If you look at any successful programs in this league you will see a myriad of support. Everything from parents volunteers to local media help.
2. Comfortable skates – Although it is not a requirement to skate as a coach if you're going to, make sure you're comfortable. Also, make a decision whether you're effective on skates to demonstrate your drills during practice. If you don't think you can show them what you're talking about then use one of your players and get yourself a good pair of sneakers and keep your feet happy. The effectiveness of a coach is not determined by how well they can skate themselves.
3. A Sweat Suit – This might seem a little silly at first but during practice the less you have to worry about being comfortable the more you can worry about your program's development. Also, there really is something to be said to looking the part. Dress like a coach is expected to dress for the situation.

4. A Good Whistle – No matter how loud you are there is nothing more commanding on the rink than a whistle. Make sure you get a good whistle that will last you through the season. Believe it or not but a 99 cent whistle will break and they sound horrible.
5. A Good Supply of Pucks – This may be one of you single most frustrating aspects of practice, not enough pucks or no pucks at all. Have a plan for the season. Some coaches will require their players to bring a small number of pucks to donate to the team during the first practice, while others will buy their pucks. Whichever you choose always make you have pucks.
6. Puck Bag – Seems like a no-brainer, but the fastest way to lose pucks is at the bottom of a hockey bag.
7. Pylons or Cones. – Essential for drills during practice. You can find these at just about any sporting goods store really cheap.
8. Dry Erase board – This could be as small as a clip board or as big as a poster. The idea is to have some way of “Showing” your players what you mean.
9. Dry Erase Markers – for the Dry Erase Board, of course!

Fell free to elaborate and add to this list as your program dictates. The above items will get you ready for your practices and games.

Section 2 - ROLE OF THE COACH

The most important thing a new coach must learn is that it does not matter if you win or lose, just as long as each and every player on your team has **FUN**. A player that has fun will continue to play season after season. Too many first time volunteer coaches become trapped in the win/lose mentality, losing sight as to why kids play hockey...to have fun.

Successful coaches take on many different forms. Some are good communicators finding it easier than most to get their point across. Some are dynamic and effective motivators getting their team emotionally prepared and ready to play. Some coaches are very familiar with the game and are adapted at teaching the X's and O's of hockey, while others are very good organizers and multi-taskers.

A successful coach works toward mastering the art of effective communication with his or her players, assistant coaches and parents. Much like a school teacher, coaches are often regarded as very influential toward molding and nurturing players to success in sports as well as teaching those life lessons that will some day enhance the player's future adult life. **Please keep this in mind when working with young athletes.**

Coaching at the recreational or beginner scholastic level is very important to the growth of the sport. A young athlete's first experience with a sport and new coach will determine if he/she will continually have fun and enjoy playing inline hockey. One must remember that the primary reason kids play sports is to have fun, maintain good health and be with their friends and family. Having fun is among the primary reasons why kids play sports. On the other hand, the number one reason kids stop playing a sport is that they are no longer having fun and subsequently lose interest. **Consequently, it is the coach that will determine positive or negative experiences for his/her players.**

Effective communication with parents is an important skill for a successful coaching experience. Fostering good relationships with parents offers a wealth of support for the times when the job of coaching and managing a hockey team can be overwhelming. By networking with parents, you can create a support system to assist in areas of team communications, organizing team events, emails, snack schedules and team meetings to name a few. By recruiting capable parents to assist with the weekly team management duties, you can ensure an efficient team program and structure essential to the success of your team, while minimizing the affects of coaching “Burn-Out”.

Although parent volunteers are an effective resource for assistance, you must first ensure that you communicate the goals and policies of the league and team program. These team policies and expectations are essential toward a good relationship with your team volunteers, and players. Communicating these policies and expectations with your volunteer group will ensure a clear and

mutual understanding of how the team program will develop and progress throughout the league season and subsequent seasons. Here are some critical points of importance to discuss with your volunteers.

- The role of parents
- Your season goals
- Team and league rules
- The amount of playing time each athlete can expect
- Practice and game schedule with expected attendance
- Your philosophy of discipline and expected behavior
- When and how to talk with the coach

In many cases, people volunteer to coach sports teams to assist their local sports facility form teams where their own child may participate. The task of coaching a team(s) where your child participates can be among the most challenging undertakings as a coach. The best rule of thumb to remember is to ensure equal treatment throughout all your players. Be consistent in your treatment of your players.

- Don't single your child out for either excessive praise or criticism.
- Don't give your child any special treatment or playing time.

Parents can be very objectionable toward their child getting inferior treatment than that of the coach's child. Treat all players equally, fairly and with respect.

It is also important to remember that you are still a parent as well as a coach. The ride home for a practice or game can be very productive as a parent and a coach. Consider that on the way home you can ask your child, "how was practice or the game"; "What did you learn today"; "Did you have fun". Remember you now have a dual role as parent and a coach.

The coach should have a general knowledge of the playing rules and we recommend taking some time to read the USARS/AAU game rules and league rules. Your knowledge of these rules will make you better informed toward evaluating and assessing game penalties and and/or vital game situations.

Remember why you are coaching in the first place. Your negative or positive actions while in the presence of your players will have a direct affect on their game behavior as well. One example is, that you may not always agree with the officials but, arguing or yelling about a call will NEVER make an official change his/her judgment on a particular call. Remember, your example on the bench and at practices will determine how your players perform and behave while in your presence, and may also have an affect on how your players behave on and off the court and around their parents.

Young players are affected dramatically by the negative and inappropriate behavior of their coaches. They will learn how to communicate effectively or inappropriately based on your behavior while in their presence.

In retrospect, remember that a young player who is treated unfairly may not return to inline hockey and eventually try some other recreational activity. You have a tremendous influence on every player's future participation in the sport of inline hockey.

Section 3 – Coaches' Code of Ethics

Every coach must adhere to the following Code of Ethics. Although this season it will not be required, starting with the 2008 Middle School/2009 High School the Coach's Code of Ethics will be attached to the team registration and must be signed by the head coach of every team. This will be included in the team packet sent to the league during registration.

I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my players ahead of a personal desire to win.

I will take reasonable measures to honor all commitments to athletes.
I will do my best to provide a safe playing situation for my players
I will lead by example in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship to all my players.
I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players.
I will provide a sports environment for my team that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.
I will be knowledgeable in the rules of inline hockey and I will teach these rules to my players.
I will adhere to the league's rules and policies.
I will remember that I am a coach and a role model.
I will respect the fundamental rights and dignity of all participants
I will be aware of the cultural, individual and role differences include those due to age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status
I will comply with the law and encourage development of law and policies that serve the interest of the sport of inline hockey
I will be aware of my ethical responsibility to the community in which I live, work and coach.
I will not commit or condone sexual harassment or solicitation, physical advances, verbal or non-verbal that is sexual in nature and that either is unwelcome, offensive, or creates a hostile environment and I will report any such incidents to the league and/or proper authorities immediately.
I will not allow my personal problems and conflicts to interfere or harm the athletes under my supervision and care.
I will at all times maintain the highest levels of integrity and honesty.
I will be an advocate and champion of the sport, the athletes and the league.

Section 4 - LEARNING FUNDAMENTALS

Learning the fundamentals of inline hockey is essential for all young players. Much like teaching a child's ABC's, the basic fundamental skill sets such as skating, passing, puck handling, shooting, positioning, and sportsmanship will help them progress through inline hockey's process of skill advancement.

As a coach, teaching and allowing young players the experience of learning both the defensive and offensive side of the sport are important, and can become a valuable tool during league competition. This flexibility can ensure a more improved and well rounded team for future competition.

Repetition is the key to learning and the success of your young players. Repetitive drills may appear as less than exciting; however, continually working on your team's fundamental skills is inevitably going to reflect on your team and player's success.

Inline hockey fundamentals can be taught by anyone. Many coaches that are not proficient at skating can often find other, more skilled young players to help demonstrate certain skills while; the coach explains the basic fundamentals of skating. The presence of these more skilled players also act as a learning opportunity for new coaches. Often, these more skilled or experienced players can provide vital information toward skill development for your team.

Learning these basic fundamentals of inline hockey, such as skating will ensure a more productive and enjoyable experience for your players.

Remember that not all players learn or absorb information in the same manner. Some players learn by visualization, some by listening and some by experience. With this in mind, It is important to develop different methods of teaching for those players that require different levels of learning. Patience is also vital in that not all children will learn at the same pace. One-on-one learning is often required for some players, so be prepared to spend quality time with those players that may need more attention toward the fundamentals.

So, when teaching your young players the basic fundamentals remember to;

EXPLAIN yourself thoroughly, DRAW it up on your coaches' dry erase board and DEMONSTRATE the drill on the court.

It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure an equitable opportunity of play for all his/her team members. This is especially true for non-competitive and recreational in-house league players. In addition, it is also recommended that you make a practice plan and game plan to help you through the process of managing your players in an equitable manner.

PRACTICE PLAN

Effective coaching also relies on careful planning. Be prepared with a basic practice plan in advance of each practice. In many cases practice time is a luxury, and rink availability comes at a premium cost to your team. At the start of the season creating a basic skills and drills practice scenario will minimize wasted time and miscommunication between you and your players. As you observe your practices you can then prepare your game plan based on your evaluation and assessments of your players' abilities and limitations prior to game time.

As the season progresses you will continue to evaluate your players and determine their strengths and weaknesses throughout the season. This will give you additional opportunities to intelligently plan for future practices while also determining future team/individual goals and game time expectations.

Preparation is essential to your team's success and safety. Helpful tips may include taking ten minutes to prepare a practice plan prior to each practice. Making certain that your players properly prepare for games in advance is essential. A player equipment check that includes mouth guards and other appropriate safety equipment should become top-of-mind for all your players and parents before they step on the rink to compete.

Advance practice and game preparation will significantly improve your chance for success while giving you the ability to further assess your team's performance and progress. Pre-game "chalk talks" are a great opportunity to discuss implementation of what your players learned during prior practices, game strategies and appropriate motivational content prior to game time.

Post-game "chalk talks" are also beneficial for reviewing your player's game performance while preparing them for your next practice **format**. However, this only works with advance planning and preparation to avoid wasted time during games and practices.

Based on the overall skill level of your players, a basic practice format for fundamental learning at the start of the season might include the following;

- 5 Minutes – Warm up – stretching (legs, back, waist, wrist)
- 10 Minutes – Skating the circles (figure 8)
- 10 Minutes – Horseshoe Drill – (also used for pre-game warm-up)
- 5 Minutes – Stick handling (straight down the floor)
- 10 Minutes – Stick handling (around cones w/ shot on net)
- 10 Minutes – Passing (2 on 0 down rink w/ shot on net)
- Last few minutes used to play a fun game for team bonding

This format will offer a good approach to evaluating and assessing skill levels for specific skill sets such as skating, passing, puck handling and shooting.

SEASON STARTS

Into the season you will have the opportunity to further evaluate your players to further assess their team and individual progress. Important questions to ask yourself throughout the learning process might be;

- Is my team committed to playing effective defense?
- Are they executing our game plan for scoring goals?
- Is the team passing well?
- Are they following the teachings of appropriate positioning?

Your post-game assessments will guide you through the process of determining what your next practice format may in tale. You may determine that your team requires more practice on their passing and/or positioning thus, requiring you to develop additional drills that that will address those weakness.

Your practices should help define the proficiency goals and expectations of your team. Winning tournament or league championships are unrealistic and should not be at the forefront of you and your team's goals and expectations. Winning championships should serve only as bonus to all their hard work while, achieving the immediate goal of fundamental skills improvement.

Another team goal for learning is improving the player's overall fundamental knowledge of the sport. Improving team defensive skills, as well as individual and team positioning will be essential toward your team's success and improvement goals. It is important to remember that at the conclusion of the league season, all your players should walk away feeling that they have learned important aspects of the game while enjoying their inline hockey experience. This will ensure the return of your players from one season to the next.

POSITIONING

Positioning is one of many important inline hockey fundamentals. For inline hockey, a basic defensive team positioning plan is the "Box Defense". The objective of the Box Defense is to prevent penetration into the slot area and force the opposing team to shoot from the perimeter while, minimizing and/or preventing a opposing team's ability to penetrate and score within the slot area. However, the Box Defense only works well when players are in constant movement and rotation with the offensive movement of the puck. As the puck moves into the corner or shifts side to side, the players shift their positions to apply pressure to the area in which the puck is controlled. This is achieved while retaining their position of the "Box Defense". This defensive layout works as an offensive positioning scheme as well.

During practices you can work with your players to also learn how to transition from the Box on defensive to a fundamental Box position for offense. For example; on defense the closes defenseman will race to the corner and retrieve the puck while his/her defensive partner covers the front of the net. One forward goes to the near boards ready to accept a pass and the other forward shifts to the middle.

On offense the rolls are reversed. As the puck goes into an offensive corner the nearest forward goes to the corner for the puck and the other forward goes to the front of the net waiting for a pass. The defenseman on the strong side goes to the boards to support the forward in the corner and the other defenseman stays in the middle.

POSITIVE INFLUENCE

Once again, we want to reemphasize the importance of your leadership and the positive or negative affects your conduct may have on your players. The player's ability to communicate effectively with you, team mates, competitors, and parents is determined by how you conduct yourself while in their presence.

Children model the behavior of the adults that they look up to and those around them. If inappropriate behavior by the coach toward the officials is observed by the players you can only expect that they will also learn the coach's inappropriate ways of communication.

Leadership by example is the rule. Your example will reflect directly on how your players perform competitively, follow team policies, follow instructions, and behave during aversive and/or competitive situations. Follow these simple rules to avoid conflict

- Do what you say, and say what you mean.
- Be punctual to your scheduled practices and games.
- Avoid inappropriate language and behavior around or directed toward players
- Apply a fair approach to all your actions regarding your team and players.

Remember that your position as coach is to foster good will, sportsmanship, while teaching appropriate life lessons to enhance the player's future adult life.

Regardless of the game's outcome, always leave your players with a positive note. At times, you will find it necessary to provide constructive criticism to a player regarding his/her performance or commitment to the game or practice. When these situations arise, remember that when commenting on a player's negative performance, always follow-up with positive reinforcement.

Example:

"Brian, you were out of position during that last goal, but don't worry, we'll work on it at our next practice. You did a great job making that pass to Scott on the last offensive transition".

Positive reinforcement while maintaining good self esteem is very important toward the development of young players. Regular and consistent positive reinforcement ensures a better feeling toward themselves, and positively affects their performance and ability to communicate effectively, and in a positive way. As a coach, you must make a strong commitment toward teaching good sportsmanship on and off the rink.

Examples of GOOD sportsmanship:

- Shaking hands with opponents after the game
- Helping an opponent up after a play
- Showing concern for injured players
- Accepting all decisions of the referees
- Encouraging less skilled teammates

Examples of POOR sportsmanship:

- Trash talking
- Causing injury to an opponent on purpose
- Cheating
- Blaming losses on others
- Running up the score against opponents
- Making fun of a player's effort, skill, race, or size

The world is full of pressures that kids are confronted with on a daily basis. Many children come from less than desirable home conditions where playing sports is the only distraction from their daily routine and hardships. These kids are looking for leadership and mentors that will help them cope with the daily pressures of their young lives. As a coach, you may be that positive role model these kids need to develop good learning skills and become productive citizens.

Coaching also teaches players that mistakes are a common occurrence in every day life as well as in sports. On the other hand, we all learn from our mistakes and appreciate the opportunity to make the appropriate modification toward improvement. Avoid reprimanding a player for making a mistake.

Instead, make a realistic evaluation of the player's areas for improvement to share with the player and his/her parents.

Another challenge is parents that will put pressure and stress on their child with expectations of becoming the next NHL first round recruit. When high expectations and unattainable goals are forced upon a player, the outcome often results in frustration and inevitably "player burn-out".

Too often young players are expected to perform based on the parent's expectations. Remind parents that positive parenting on and off the rink is the best way for their child to improve and enjoy the game. Athletes should always receive encouragement from coaches, parents and teammates.

Winning seasons come and go, but your reputation as a coach and a role model for young athletes will last a lifetime.

Section V

Terminology

Angling – taking a defensive position on a opponent to force him/her to the side of the rink

Backcheck – applying defensive pressure to an opposing player while he/she is in the process of attacking your end of the rink.

Blade – portion of the stick that comes in contact with the puck.

Brain Bucket - Helmet

Center – player taking the face-off.

Changing on the fly – changing a line during active play as opposed to during a stoppage of play.

Defensive exchange or switch – transfer or exchange of coverage in the defensive zone from one defender to another.

Defensive team – team trying to gain control of the puck.

Defensive side – Position between the opponent you are covering and your net.

Defensive zone – side of the playing surface occupied by your team's goaltender.

Deking or fake – technique used to deceive a defender and to create an offensive opportunity.

Diameter – height (in millimeters) of a roller hockey wheel.

Durometer – hardness of a roller hockey wheel.

Five-hole – shooting space between the goaltender's legs.

Forecheck – applying defensive pressure to the opposing team in their defensive end.

Gap control – The distance between you and the opponent you are covering.

Lie of a stick – angle between the shaft of the stick and the playing surface.

Man-to-man defense – defensive strategy where each defensive man is responsible for covering one opponent and staying with him/her as long as the opposing team has possession of the puck.

Offensive team – team with control of the puck.

Offensive zone – side of the playing surface occupied by the opposing team's goaltender.

Playing-the-man – requires a defender to focus on the movement of the attacker (specifically his/her chest).

Playing-the-pass – requires a defender to maintain a position between two attackers with the intent of breaking up a pass, while covering the player with the best scoring opportunity.

Point man – defenseman in the offensive zone.

Puck protection – process in which the puck carrier keeps his/her body between the defender and the puck to maintain control of it.

Shaft – portion of the stick that the player holds on to.

Slot – Scoring area in front of the net.

Strong side – The side of the rink the puck is on.

Twig – Stick.

Weak side – The side of the rink the puck is not on.