

## **HOCKEY MADE EASY- Early Season Tips for Youth Hockey Coaches, Parents and Players**

It's early in the new hockey season and many Youth Hockey tryout camps have concluded. The coaches have made their final player selections and the Team is set for this year.

That was the relatively easy part. Now comes the hard part.

### **What should the Coaches do now?**

**First**, Coaches must establish a **plan** for the entire **6-month** hockey season ahead. They must provide their players with **timely** and **specific** hockey information. This can be accomplished by running a multitude of organized and challenging up tempo **on-ice** and **off-ice** practices that will help **all** players improve their individual and team skills over the course of the entire season. By doing this, it will enable your Team and players to hit their **conditioning peak** and **skill performance** right at playoff time.

The **second** big challenge facing many Youth Hockey Coaches' and GM's is **molding** 15 or more individuals with **different** personalities, learning abilities and skill levels into a **cohesive** and **competitive** hockey team. Believe me, this is no easy task, but by following the tips below it is possible.

### **Both of these challenges can be overcome by using the following methods:**

Holding a team meeting near the start of the season with parents and players to explain your goals, winning or player improvement, objectives and team rules.  
2. Recruiting a number of **experienced** Assistant or **guest** Coaches to help you teach skills at practices. One coach can no longer do it all by him/herself.  
Holding weekly 1.5 to 2 hour **off-ice skills** teaching sessions in a school gymnasium or a large hall to teach skills, systems and strategies.  
4. Conducting **challenging** on-ice practice sessions that duplicate game like situations to correct past errors.  
5. Holding periodic **team** meetings in a relaxed setting to explain, review and even test your players with different hockey situations & systems to see if they understand them. Hosting at least 2 Team **parties**, 1 prior to Christmas and the 2<sup>nd</sup> just prior to the playoffs to build team spirit and unity.

These 6 suggestions will help develop your player's confidence, hockey skills and their understanding of the games systems & strategies required to become a **competitive** team.

They will also build **team spirit**, cohesiveness and harmony in your dressing room that will take your Team a long way toward having **fun** and achieving a very successful season.

**For first time** Rep/Travel Team or House League coaches this can be a very challenging time. Specifically, what basic skills, systems and strategies to teach your players and when to do it during the regular season.

**For young players**, this is also a challenging time, as steady improvement in their basic individual skills, then their team skills, will determine how competitive your team will be throughout the regular season and how far you will advance in the playoffs.

A piece of advice for all Head Coaches, **one person cannot coach** by him/herself anymore.

There is just too much teaching required for one coach to do. You need a number of good Assistant or guest Coaches to help you run on-ice and off-ice practices and to assist you in the dressing/locker room prior to the game and on the bench during a game.



Try to find the most qualified or experienced hockey people to assist you and one's who have the same coaching philosophy and are on the same page as you. You will find the difficult job of coaching a youth hockey Team that much easier and just as rewarding by utilizing Assistant Coaches to share the coaching and teaching responsibility.

**Another tip for Coaches.** A good early season starting point is to assess your team's skills during scrimmages, exhibition and early season League games. Identify your Team's positive points and the skills, systems and strategy that **will need more work.**

**Make a list** of the things you need to improve on over the next 4 weeks and write them down. Decide what the immediate priority is and what skills, systems etc. can wait to be taught at a later time during the season.

### **Here are some Key Points to consider for your List:**

What physical condition are your players in?  
Can your team score goals?  
Can they prevent goals?  
Can they pass the puck accurately?  
Are they good checkers that can create puck turnovers then recover loose pucks?  
Are they quick skaters, or a bit slow of foot?  
Do they understand the different forechecking and backchecking systems?  
Do they give up too many odd man rushes, or too many quality shots on goal?  
Do they understand the correct positioning on your clearing/breakout plays?  
Do they understand the importance of the transition game and the difference between offensive and defensive hockey?  
Do they understand that **preventing** goals is just as important as scoring goals and will contribute greatly to winning games?

**And last**, but certainly not least, are your players taking too many penalties? Do they understand the new Youth Hockey rules regarding bodychecking, interference and obstruction? i.e You can only bodycheck the puckcarrier. The stick can only be used to play the puck not impede the progress of the puck carrier.

You may need to spend some early time on reviewing what causes penalties and what you can physically do to prevent them.

### **What should be taught first?**

Depending on the answers to the above questions, your on-ice practices and off-ice teaching sessions should be based on your players and Teams assessed needs. You can cover a lot of this material in 1 or 2 on-ice or off-ice practices.

No matter what your players' age, or caliber of team you are coaching, i.e. "AAA" Rep/All Star players or Recreational House Leaguers, you must **keep it fun**, then everybody will enjoy the hockey experience and learn how to play hockey correctly and safely. You must keep both your games and practices fun. Young players sign up to play hockey and have fun, not to be yelled at by their coaches.

If coaches are seeking some guidance in these hockey matters, there are three Hockey Made Easy **e-book resources** and **DVD video** available to help you teach 5 to 12 year old, male and female hockey players in the following areas.

1. The 30 page, **"Parents and Coaches Teaching Guide."**  
Used for both on-ice and off-ice Teaching sessions.  
It can be used for teaching young male or female House League or "AAA" players the skills and rules required to play hockey correctly and safely by providing specific hockey information and includes a number of game like drills.  
The teaching can be done at home by a parent, or at the rink or in a gymnasium



by the Team's coaches. Order at <https://www.tdc.ca/secure7/orderebooks.htm>

**N.B.** This manual is **included** as a Complimentary gift with the purchase of the complete 200+ page Hockey Made Easy Instruction Manual. The 35 page, "**Seasonal Instruction Plan for Minor/Youth Hockey Coaches.**" Includes running a successful tryout camp, skills evaluation for all positions and tips on the selection of players, teaching basic and complicated skills over the course of an entire hockey season, playoff preparation and several suggestions for utilizing competitive hockey strategies for regular season and playoff games.

Order at <https://www.tdc.ca/secure7/orderebooks.htm>

The 48 page, "**Coaches Practice Guide.**"

How to run organized practices by rotating small groups of players from station-to-station to receive different skill instruction from Assistant coaches. Also the use of game like drills and scrimmages to improve your team. Included is the selection criterion for Assistant coaches, a yearly practice plan overview, **plus** 6 complete practice plans and a player skills evaluation form for evaluating forwards, defencemen & goaltenders.

Order at <https://www.tdc.ca/secure7/orderebooks.htm>

4. WAHA (Wisconsin Amateur Hockey Association) "Developing Defensemen" DVD by Matt Walsh USA Hockey/WAHA Coaching Director

To Order this Video <https://www.tdc.ca/secure9/video.htm>

These 3 Manuals and DVD were created specifically for coaches teaching male or female Minor/Youth players in the Initiation, Novice/Mite, Atom/Squirt and Peewee groups of 5 to 12 years of age.

Simply go to [www.HockeyMadeEasy.com](http://www.HockeyMadeEasy.com) and click on **Home Page** at the bottom of the web page then click on e-books located in the (upper left corner) to review the full Table of Contents of these 3 helpful coaching resources.

These Manuals are compatible and **used in conjunction** with the complete 200+ page "*Hockey Made Easy Instruction Manual.*" Order at <https://www.tdc.ca/secure7/orderebooks.htm>

## Tips for Parents and Players

There's a saying "**Practice makes Perfect**" and this especially applies to hockey skills. Players must attend every practice if they and their Team are going to improve. Players must listen to their coaches and do the skill drills to the best of their ability. Practices are where individual skills & team improvements are made, not during games. Parents must ensure their child gets to every practice or he/she will fall behind the other players. Coaches cannot set lines or work on specific offensive or defensive plays if players don't attend practices.

I realize players love to play meaningful hockey games and hate hockey practices, but players rarely learn a lot by playing hockey games.

**It's the practices** that prepare you for the games.

So whether it's an off-ice teaching session or an on-ice practice, it's in your best interest for your child to attend **every** single practice to work on improving their hockey skills.

**A final tip**, "players must listen attentively to their coaches."

They are the men or women who were selected by your local Minor/Youth Hockey Association's Selection Committee to coach your hockey team this year.

The coaches have special hockey **training** and completed the compulsory coaching **courses** to become either a Head or Assistant coach.

They are giving a lot of their time to help you **have fun** and to improve your game, so please show them respect and pay attention to what they have to say.

**In conclusion**, if you are no longer involved with Minor or Youth Hockey programs and would like your e-mail address taken off our Hockey Made Easy Tips data base simply **reply** (top left) with the address these tips were sent to and state "re\*move" in the subject line and it will be dealt with immediately.

Please consider forwarding these tips to those hockey coaches or volunteers who took



your place, or youth hockey parents or players who might find the information helpful.

**Have you ever wondered?**

**Why** do some Minor Hockey Teams win over 80% of their games while others try everything possible and are lucky to win 25% of theirs?  
What if there was an **easy** way you could improve your Team's winning percentage by 15%, 25% **even** 40% or more, would that improve your position in the League standings?

**Find out the answer** at [www.HockeyMadeEasy.com](http://www.HockeyMadeEasy.com)

If you know someone who is involved with hockey please forward these list of tips to them.

Yours in hockey,

John Shorey  
Author- "Hockey Made Easy" – Canada's Best Instruction Manual  
[www.HockeyMadeEasy.com](http://www.HockeyMadeEasy.com)

**P.S.** Did you know you could read some of our **previous** complimentary tips on our newly revised Hockey Made Easy website?  
Simply go to, Send Me My \*Free\* Hockey Tips Now to view them.

