



RCFHA Coaching Guide

Introduction to Coaching

Overview – The Basics

For those who are new to coaching or are considering coaching, this is the place for you. Coaching can be an incredibly rewarding and fun process, really connecting you to your child and their team. It is a unique experience, and not one that you'll have to go through alone.

You will take on the responsibility of developing your roster not only as players, but as a team, and as people.

As a coach, you and your fellow coach(es) will be relied on to lead your team through practices & games and attend coach's meetings. Practices are run once a week (excluding practice gym blackout dates), at the same date/time/location every week. Games run once per weekend (excluding holidays/winter vacation), on the same date and within a similar time range (excluding the tournament at the beginning of March).

You are encouraged to appoint a team manager to help facilitate communications with the rest of the parents (game/practice date/times, scorekeeper/timekeeper, optional things like snack schedules, etc)

General Duties and Responsibilities

As a coach, you are responsible to:

- Lead and manage your team during practices and games
- Supervise all present members of your team
- Develop players' teamwork, sportsmanship, friendship and skills through example, teaching and direction
- Ensure all players receive equal playing time during games



Contact: coaches@rcfha.org

- Effectively communicate game and practice dates/times/locations (can be done through a team manager)
- Assign a scorekeeper or timekeeper for every game (can be done through a team manager)
- Have fun!

Team Building/Development

Establishing a Culture

One of the most important, and often overlooked, keys to a successful season is establishing a culture within the team.

The biggest thing is the age/division that you're in. It's all about finding a way for the players to bond with each other and with you, and about earning their respect rather than demanding it. Creating a culture that balances fun and lightheartedness with mutual respect and work ethic will give your team the ideal environment to thrive.

All players should feel motivated to play and to improve, but also know that they are never expected or forced to succeed every time. Trials, struggles and losses are a part of every sport and should be used constructively as learning experiences.

Identifying Player Styles

A key aspect of deciphering how to develop your players is to observe their individual styles of play and incorporating them all together so that your team's style incorporates everyone's strengths.

In terms of skills, the goal is to develop well-rounded players who can utilize their new and improved skill sets in various roles and positions.

Identifying their skills (shot, puck skill, positioning, decision making, hustle), tendencies (whether they tend to pass or shoot more, whether they are more aggressive or passive, etc.) and intangibles (leadership, teamwork, etc.) goes a long way in knowing what to work on/focus on with each individual player.



Incorporating Player Style into Strategy

It is great to balance your team's style by pairing players together in the lineup who have different styles. For example, a speedy player with a good hockey IQ would be a great forward partner with a bigger, stronger player with a hard shot. A tall and positionally sound defenseman would be great paired with a less skilled player with less defensive experience. While this is a great starting point, you should also consistently experiment with new combinations, new players at different positions, to find what works best. Sometimes the most effective combinations are the last ones someone would expect to work.

Developing The Team by Developing Individuals

While it is very important to develop your team as a whole, from skills to chemistry to sportsmanship, it is also beneficial to spend time working with specific players on the side during team drills.

Players, especially younger/newer/less skilled ones, will benefit from having a chance to be 1 on 1 with a coach to help develop certain aspects of their game. It also gives you as a coach a chance to form a closer bond with each player as you work with them on an individual level.

Dividing the gym into two sides, one much larger than the other, is a great way to isolate a player to work on other skills without interruption on either side.

Ultimately this gives you an opportunity to get less experienced or less skilled players a boost in their development which can reap huge rewards for both the kid (as a player and as a person) and a huge boost for the team overall when players become noticeably better as the season goes on.

Practices

Overview/General Suggestions

Practice is your best chance to build and grow your team's skills and to build connections and develop intangibles like teamwork.

It's important to make the most out of the limited time you have – it's a great opportunity to get your team ahead of the curve.



Contact: coaches@rcfha.org

It's very important to connect with the players, to identify their play and personality style, and to use that to grow and develop them. Likewise, it's important to identify the overall style of the team and build off that.

A few major things to focus on regardless of division are:

- On-floor communication between players
- Teamwork and sportsmanship
- Hustle and effort
- Positioning
- Skill development/fundamentals
- Power play, penalty kill and overtime situations
- Making practices fun and constructive
-

Suggestions By Division

Each division is slightly different, as age and size are major factors. A game at the Mite or Jr. Squirt level will have a very different style/pace than a game at the Peewee or Bantam level.

Mites

These are very young kids; they are generally easy to enthuse but also very easily distracted. It's a good idea to try having one person keep the players focused during instructions.

The upside is that they also will develop skills quite quickly. Spend a lot of time working on the basics/fundamentals (puck handling, passing, shooting, positioning) and specially make sure the kids don't all follow each other.

Enforcing the "triangle" offensive system and always having one defender in the slot area works extremely well, as does teaching them how to elevate their shots.

Mites generally respond well to positive reinforcement and will feed off the energy you bring.

Junior Squirts

Metro Vancouver
#117-12100 Riverside Way
Richmond, BC
V6W 1K5



Contact: coaches@rcfha.org

There are usually a fair number of new players, so it is important to focus on fundamentals (shooting, passing, puck handling). Positioning and strategy are very important to cover – at this age, players respond well to encouragement/motivation.

It is also beneficial to try players at every position to get a sense of what works where. Often, the best/hardest shooter on your team is more valuable deployed on defense if they have the range to get a shot on net from there.

Senior Squirts

At this age, many players have at least a few years' experience playing hockey, whereas on the other hand you may also have brand new players.

Focusing on fundamentals with those who need it is very important, but building team chemistry and strategizing is essential. By this age, most players will be able to comprehend strategy quite well, so as the team chemistry increases you can get into more advanced topics such as give and go plays, goalie screens, etc.

It is really important to identify the emotional traits of all of your players in order to learn how to best lift them up (or calm them down) when needed – keeping everyone motivated and even-keeled is essential.

Peewee

You will have a vast array of player types – due to the age bracket, you will have some players with the physique of a grown man, but also have others who haven't hit their growth spurt yet. As a result, it is crucial to build chemistry and balance size/skill across your lines to complement the range of player types on your team.

Bigger/stronger players are generally effective in front of the net and in puck battles, whereas smaller players generally have an edge in agility. Obviously, this will vary from player to player, but it's something to keep in mind.

At this age, some players can become frustrated or down on themselves (or both) easily as hormones become a factor. It is essential to identify each player's emotional traits so that you can find a way to keep them encouraged, motivated and even keeled.

Work on skills such as fast shot releases, giving and receiving passes as the gameplay is fast paced – there is not a lot of time for someone to settle a puck and think something through first.

Metro Vancouver
#117-12100 Riverside Way
Richmond, BC
V6W 1K5



Contact: coaches@rcfha.org

Bantam

The oldest youth division, Bantam team success is heavily dependent on team chemistry, morale/mood and good strategy. Being that they're teenagers, it also will be important to identify each player's emotional traits so that you're able to successfully manage them when they become down on themselves or frustrated.

You're likely going to have multiple players with 10+ years of experience, so you can definitely use their experience to help with strategy.

This is a fast-paced division, so for skills, the biggest things are giving and receiving passes/saucer passes, quick shots and puck protection. There will be almost no time for players to stop and process the play, so on-floor communication and chemistry will be imperative.

Games

Ah, our favorite part of the week – Cosom games. All the skill and chemistry building at practice will now come onto display...

Games can be very fast paced and require split second decision making, so it is important to have a strategy coming in, and to have thorough communication with your co-coach(es) and your players.

Strategizing For Games

A lot of the strategy depends on trial and error. Even for the most experienced coach, there is never a "perfect" recipe to success for every single game.

What is important is to balance strategizing how to counter the other team, but also not straying from the things that makes your team perform at their best.

Check your scouting notes (or our SportNinja app) and identify who the dangerous players are on the other team, as well as if they're more of an offensive or defensive team. Take note of any of the other team's weaknesses such as if they're prone to taking a certain penalty.

Rely on as many sources within your team as you feel necessary – remember that the players have a different perspective and may have their own ideas/suggestions that are very effective.

Having prepared lineups is a great idea, but adaptation is also extremely important.

Metro Vancouver
#117-12100 Riverside Way
Richmond, BC
V6W 1K5



Preparing Your Team

With your carefully hand-crafted strategy, it's time to get your team ready for action. A pregame routine is a really beneficial idea as it allows your team to loosen up, warm up and strategize. You can set up something like this:

- Ask players to arrive 20 minutes before the game start time, with both jerseys.
- Spend 5mins stretching while discussing strategy, expectations and keys to success.
- Spend another 10mins running a warmup drill
- Spend the last 5mins letting players fill their bottles, bring their items to the bench, etc.

Spending a minute 1 on 1 with each player can go a long way as well. Having identified their strengths and weaknesses, explain the goal/expectation you have for them.

Running the Bench

Managing your bench during the game can be very straightforward sometimes, other times it can feel like a sped-up game of Tetris (so, stressful). A great way to manage this is to split up line changes with your other coach(es) so that one does the offence and the other does defense. This allows both of you to focus on each area and provide more direct feedback in-game.

Make sure that all players receive equal playing time and equal opportunity. Give everyone a chance to thrive and a chance to grow. Manage shift lengths so that players still have about 50-70% energy when they come off – usually 1-2 minutes is a good length, but it will vary. Find the right balance for you and your team. Keep a close eye on the mood of each player, so that you can keep them level-headed and energized.

The Emotions of the Game

A LOT happens in a short time – the biggest thing is that as coaches, we must maintain our composure and positive attitude. While it is always good to adjust and fine-tune lineups and strategies, try not to panic and always keep faith in your team. With that said, trust your gut, trust your coaches and trust your players.



Contact: coaches@rcfha.org

As coaches, we must ensure we keep our whole team's emotions in check. Remember, the players look up to us – we need to set a high standard of professionalism, sportsmanship and positivity, especially when things get tough

Metro Vancouver
#117-12100 Riverside Way
Richmond, BC
V6W 1K5