



# Victorian Junior Hockey Association Inc.

## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINING JUNIORS

We want to ensure that not only do the players enjoy their hockey and therefore remain with their Club, but that they all understand the basics of the game. Here are some general suggestions that may be useful to coaches.

1. **Control:** Unlike groups of senior players, coaches need to maintain control in order to establish discipline in order to conduct effective training sessions. Kids are used to responding to whistles, as this is the primary means of control used by teachers in the school ground. The normal understanding is if you wish to gain attention, blow the whistle once and do not talk or commence an activity until everyone is stationary and silent. You may have to reinforce this a few times to start with.
2. **Safety:** Parents assume that the activities at training will be well supervised to ensure the safety of their children. Pay particular attention to safety if the players are hitting the ball. They should be clear of others and there should be an appropriate distance between them and the player they are passing either to, or through. One of my concerns is always when groups of players are bashing the ball into the net prior to training. Rather than ban it we would be best to educate the players as to the safest way to go about the activity.
3. **Drills:** The best drills are those where players are involved to a high degree rather than standing around for long periods of time. It is not possible to correct each error every time a player is involved. Rather the correction should happen in such a manner that a drill continues for the other players. If the drill is too difficult make it easier so that success is ensured.
4. **Small Games:** Kids love games. Coaches should use them to focus upon various elements of hockey, eg, individual skills such as reverse drags, receiving on the move, keeping your stick on the ball; decision making such as recognising 2v1, where space is. By using question and answer techniques you can understand what is going through the minds of the players and therefore have a basis for changing their approach.
5. **Correct Technique:** It is imperative that the players perform techniques correctly especially the younger ones who are learning the sport. If a player is performing the skill incorrectly in front of you, then show them the correct method. This is particularly important with hitting. Hands should be together, holding the stick with the Vee of the thumb and forefinger on each hand on top edge of the stick when the stick face is pointing in the direction of the hit. The hands should be gripping the stick down the shaft so that the player can easily swing the stick. Teach correct technique now and it is easier later.
6. **Planning:** It is my view that you should plan your session PRIOR to training, not as you go. It helps to write the plan down on a piece of paper.



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## SUGGESTED TRAINING FORMAT FOR JUNIORS

This is simply a training format that you might follow if you do not have one that you currently use.

- 0-5 minutes:** Warm-up, 2 laps or something similar to get the players used to the notion of warm-ups. You might also run through some simple stretches.
- 5-10 minutes:** Small game to get them going. You might emphasize something you practiced the previous week.
- 10-20 minutes:** Introduce a skill and practice it in a drill that involves everyone.
- 20-30 minutes:** Small game with emphasis on the skill just practiced.
- 30-35 minutes:** Drink break.
- 35-45 minutes:** Another skill/drill segment.
- 45-55 minutes:** Small game with skill emphasis.

End of session.

The object of the sessions should be to involve the players as much as possible. Therefore rather than have small games of 8 v 8, you would have 2 games of 4v4 to accentuate the involvement of the players. All players should experience some success at some skill during the session. They all pay fees so should receive equal attention.



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## GUIDELINES FOR COACHING JUNIORS

The overwhelming objective of junior coaching should be to enable the players to enjoy their experience of both training and playing games in order that they want to form a lifelong attachment to their Club. The second objective should be to ensure that we develop technically and tactically competent players. The third, and at this stage the least important objective should be to win. It is better to focus upon being competitive.

### **Teaching Skills:**

The accepted format for skill development is;

1. Identify the skill.
2. Stage a demonstration of the skill, by you or somebody who performs the skill technically correct. Children are very good at copying, so they need to copy an ideal model.
3. Ask the players what they noticed.
4. Point out the important aspects of the skill.
5. Set up appropriate practices. That is, vary the pressure involved so that they can achieve success. Then increase the pressure as they become more competent.

All the above should take no more than 2-3 minutes. Research shows that the best teachers/coaches spent more time on task than less competent.

### **Correcting performance:**

The whole process of correction should revolve around acknowledging the positives and then suggesting changes. We do not want to develop players afraid of making mistakes. Therefore do not use a negative approach. They are doing the best they can, and are not deliberately stuffing up.

### **Tactical Considerations:**

All children can be taught tactics, irrespective of their skill standard. Different age groups require different levels of sophistication, but all can understand what the team is trying to do.

### **Defence:**

The key elements:- each defender must know where their opponent is at all times. When marking them they should stand goal side. The key to defence is forcing the opposition wide, and not letting them penetrate on your goal side. When we have the ball, possession and safety are critical. Try to build the ball out in possession. If under pressure, gain a free hit or go to the sideline. As much as possible defenders should try to cover each other so that there is depth in defence.

### **Midfield:**

The key is to go forward as quickly as possible into available space. If there is none available then look to change the play by passing or running square. Deep in midfield, possession should be paramount; towards the attacking 25 greater risks can be taken by trying to get the ball in behind the defence. Free players need to move to be available.

### **Attack:**

The key to goal scoring is taking the ball into the circle in control, either by passing or by carrying it individually. Most goals are scored from in front of the net and not more than 5 metres out. Forwards should try to end up in that position, having lost their opponent.

The basic game plan should focus upon learning to recognise when to pass and when to run with the ball. Teaching 2v1, should occur early so that a passing game can be established. Later players should be able to recognise and play 1v1.

In summary the players must be taught to understand why they do certain things in certain situations.

**By John Mowat**