

HOW TO EVALUATE

Once you have determined what to evaluate, the next step is to organize your tryout sessions in such a way that the players can be assessed on the identified variables. This assessment may be carried out using the following methods:

Specific Skill Drills

Individual skills such as skating and passing can be evaluated using combination skill drills. Initially these drills may be very artificial with little or no resistance, however, there should be an attempt made to simulate game conditions in a progressive manner.

Skill Testing

A number of skill tests are now available, particularly for skating speed and agility. These can be used by coaches as a means of comparing players. As a cautionary note, however, it must be remembered these tests are typically quite far removed from actual game situations. In addition, they can use up a great deal of time, particularly for a large group of players.

Competitive Drills

Paired races and other drills which pit two players against one another in a confined space with a specific objective (e.g., beat your partner to the loose puck) are excellent methods of evaluating individual skills as well as mental and physical qualities. For example, you can learn a great deal about a player's desire and ability to use strength in the corner.

Although competitive evaluation drills can be used throughout the tryouts (and during the season as practice drills), they are particularly useful in the latter stages of the tryouts when the coach wishes to create specific pairings to compare players being considered for final positions on the team.

Scrimmages

Naturally, the best way of evaluating a player's ability to play the game is to evaluate the individual under game conditions. Scrimmages can be effectively used throughout the tryout period, beginning with the first session. You can evaluate most of the previously listed player characteristics during scrimmages and exhibition games. Furthermore, they provide perhaps the only real means of assessing a player's ability to read and react.

Here are a few additional considerations related to the use of scrimmages in your evaluation of players:

- Change line combinations and defense pairings in order to observe players under different situations
- Use exhibition games to help you make decisions about borderline or marginal players
- Unless skill deficiencies are extremely obvious, you should not release a player prior to seeing that individual under game conditions (e.g., scrimmage and/or exhibition game)

DESIGNING TRYOUTS

A constructive way to approach a tryout is to see it as a way of placing athletes on teams where they will benefit most, not as a dead-end experience where players are cut away from hockey.

The tryout is a good opportunity to get some pre-season skill observations which can tell both you and the athlete where work may be needed. It should be as well thought out and organized as other parts of your program.

Planning for the First Tryout Session

Proper planning will eliminate a lot of potential problems at the first tryout session. Therefore, the coach should ensure that the administrative details are taken care of in advance. In many situations, the minor hockey association will assume responsibility for some of these tasks but the coach should be aware of them in any case. The following are some guidelines related to the first tryout session:

A. Inform Parents/Players of Tryout Details in Advance

Parents and players should be advised, well in advance, about the requirements for the tryouts. This is particularly important at the younger age levels where parents may not be aware of the need, for example, of full and proper protective equipment. In addition to informing them about the association's policies regarding such aspects as protective equipment, medical examinations, and age classifications, they should also be provided with a complete schedule of sessions and other pertinent information regarding the conduct of the tryouts. Where feasible, this information should be provided at a meeting in order to permit parents to ask any additional questions. The meeting format will also provide you with an opportunity to outline your player selection plan.

B. Ensure that Necessary Resources are Available

To be able to plan the content of the sessions, it is necessary to know what resources will be available. You should have sufficient pucks (at least one for every player), pylons, and scrimmage vests. It is also desirable to have water bottles, particularly if the sessions are intense or longer than 50 minutes in duration. A first aid kit should also be available for all sessions, along with a qualified first aid person or trainer.

C. Arrive Early

Although proper planning should eliminate most problems, it is advisable to arrive at the arena well in advance of the actual starting time. This will provide you with ample time to check that everything is in place and to answer any questions from parents, players, or your support staff. Since most of the administrative tasks have been assigned to others, you should also have time to review the tryout plan with your assistants and make any last minute adjustments.

D. Prepare the Players

Prior to going on the ice, you should outline the selection process to the players. This pre-ice session should include the following information:

- What player qualities you are looking for
- Explanation of the drills to be run and their purposes
- Objectives of scrimmage sessions
- Target timeline for team selection

ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PLAYER EVALUATION

The next step in the player evaluation process is the recruitment of other personnel to assist in the assessment of players.

A. On-rink Assistants

You should have two or more on-rink assistants to help conduct the tryout sessions. These individuals can assist in player evaluation for specific positions (e.g., defense players, goaltenders), by carrying out evaluation drills with small groups of players.

B. Observers

Another means of obtaining player assessment is to use "expert" observers in the stands who are assigned the task of rating players on specific criteria. In addition to providing you with a second opinion on borderline players, observers can also be used to record more detailed player assessment information for later analysis.

C. Coaching Staff

In the end, final decisions for player selection rest with you the coach. In some cases you may be familiar with a number of players, having observed them in previous seasons. Such prior information, combined with player assessments from observers and on-rink assistants, is invaluable. However, it is essential that you create opportunities for yourself during the tryouts to screen and evaluate all players as effectively as possible.

RELEASING PLAYERS

Once decisions have been made regarding the release or cutting of players during the tryout period, you must have a plan for informing these players. Although the details of this plan will vary from coach to coach, and will depend to some extent on the age level of the players, the following guidelines should be adhered to as much as possible.

A. Avoid Public Announcements

B. Speak with the Player Individually

C. Invite Questions from the Player

D. Direct the Player to Another Team

E. Leave on a Positive Note

F. Dealing with Parents

Be prepared to answer questions from parents regarding the reasons for your decision. Again, be honest and straightforward. In addition, try to avoid confrontations with parents, particularly in front of the player.

Evaluation Tools

The following is a sample evaluation tool which could be used by coaches at the advanced levels of hockey during player selection, periodic player evaluation, or scouting the opposition.

PLAYER EVALUATION AND SCOUTING REPORT

Date _____

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____
 Zip Code _____
 Telephone _____ Birth date _____ Height _____ Weight _____
 Shoots: Left or Right _____
 Preferred Hockey Position _____
 2nd Preferred _____
 Grade Level _____
 Prior Levels of Competition _____
 City _____ State _____

Evaluator _____
 Telephone _____
 Position Of Evaluator _____
 City _____

RATING SCALE

Exceptional	6
Very Good	5
Good	4
Satisfactory	3
Weak	2
Poor	1

Circle Number Indicating **Skill Rating: Goaltenders**

1. Reflexes	6 5 4 3 2 1
2. Cover Angles	6 5 4 3 2 1
3. Control of the Puck	6 5 4 3 2 1
4. Agility	6 5 4 3 2 1
5. Anticipation	6 5 4 3 2 1

Style Defense Players

1. Moving the Puck/Playmaking	6 5 4 3 2 1
2. Point Play	6 5 4 3 2 1
3. Net Play	6 5 4 3 2 1
4. Neutral Ice Play	6 5 4 3 2 1
5. Board Play	6 5 4 3 2 1

General Qualities-All Players

1. Concentration	6 5 4 3 2 1
2. Mental Toughness	6 5 4 3 2 1
3. Drive	6 5 4 3 2 1
4. Hockey Sense	6 5 4 3 2 1
5. Stamina	6 5 4 3 2 1
6. Attitude	6 5 4 3 2 1
7. Coachable	6 5 4 3 2 1
8. Tardiness	6 5 4 3 2 1
9. Leadership	6 5 4 3 2 1
10. Toughness & Aggressiveness	6 5 4 3 2 1

Style Forwards

1. Ability to Break for Openings	6 5 4 3 2 1
2. Scoring Ability	6 5 4 3 2 1
3. Playmaking/Moving the Puck	6 5 4 3 2 1
4. Defensive Play	6 5 4 3 2 1
5. Face-off	6 5 4 3 2 1

Skill Techniques-All Players

1. Skating Forward	6 5 4 3 2 1
2. Skating Backwards	6 5 4 3 2 1
3. Skating Mobility	6 5 4 3 2 1
4. Puck Control	6 5 4 3 2 1
5. Shooting	6 5 4 3 2 1
6.	6 5 4 3 2 1

Total up the number of 6's, 5's, 4's, 3's 2's and 1's to compare players

Please see below for definitions

PLAYER EVALUATION REPORT DEFINITIONS

Goaltenders

Agility - general balance, movements around the goal area, recovery to a balanced stance.

Anticipation - ability to read the development of the play and make appropriate adjustments.

Consistency - ability to perform well throughout a game, as well as from game to game regardless of score or league standings.

Control of The Puck - deflects or covers rebounds, passes and freezes the puck when necessary, intercepts passes across the front of the net, poke checks.

Covers Angles - moves out at the proper time and in the correct relationship to the puck.

Reflexes - quick movements of arms and legs from all positions.

Defense Players

Board Play - uses body, maintains control or gains possession of the puck along the boards and in the corners.

Moving the Puck/Playmaking - uses partner, makes the soft lead pass as well as the firm crisp pass at the right time. Passes off a shot, keeps passing options open, does not telegraph passes.

Net Play - ties man up without tying up self, protects the goaltender, moves the screen from the path of the puck, clears loose pucks without losing possessions, uses body effectively.

Neutral Zone Play - reads the attack and adjust to various situations, stands up and makes the play at the blue line, uses body effectively, controls the puck and initiates counterattacks.

Point Play - reads the play and pinches, supports partner and becomes more involved in the attack at the right time, reads and selects right shooting option, uses body effectively.

Forwards

Ability to Break for Openings - reads play, conserves ice, selects proper path, timing and acceleration to get into the clear.

Defensive Play - ability to forecheck, backcheck, kill penalties, and plays defensively in the defensive zone.

Face-offs - ability to win the face-off consistently to both sides as well as forward and back.

Playmaking/Moving the Puck - moves puck at the right moment, gets into the clear after making the pass, does not telegraph plays, keeps options open, takes check to make the play, good awareness of all options.

Scoring Ability - uses good selection of shots, timing, accuracy, concentration and positioning to maximize scoring opportunities.

General Qualities - All Players

Attitude - unselfish, works hard, listens and tries to perform to the best of their ability, team player with desire.

Coachable - listens to instructions regarding team play and individual improvement, ties to execute to utmost of ability.

Concentration - ability to remain intense and stay with the play at all times.

Drive - constant desire to excel in all situations.

Hockey Sense - understanding and adaptation to the play, awareness of the overall play development.

Leadership - leads by example, cool in tough situations, makes "big" play, respected by teammates.

Living Habits - gets adequate sleep, eats and drinks moderately to remain in top condition.

Mental Toughness - sticks to the game plan, stands up to tough situations.

Stamina - ability to play at a high level of intensity throughout the game and from game to game.

Toughness & Aggressiveness - desires to play physically within the rules of the game, clears traffic in front of the goal, blocks shots.

Skill Techniques:

- Checking - angles well, completes the checks, checks with intensity.
- Puck Control - includes stickhandling, passing and receiving.
- Shooting - power and accuracy in all the shots, use of variety and knowledge of when to shoot.
- Skating Backward - stride, balance, speed, acceleration and change of pace.
- Skating Forward - stride, balance, speed, acceleration and change of pace.
- Skating Mobility - crossovers, tight turns, quick stops, moves right and left with equal efficiency.

Here we are again, it is that time in late summer when all youth hockey players, parents and coaches are gearing you for tryouts.

It is that time to prove yourself to a coach or selection committee, whether you are beginning hockey for the first time as a junior high team or getting ready to make the varsity team.

The key elements to having a successful tryout is to be properly prepared – that goes for both the parents and players. Players need to be prepared mentally as well as physically and parents play an important role in assisting their child in the preparation stage.

There are as many different styles of tryouts as there are coaches in the country. But there is one common element--players will be evaluated on the basic skills of the game: skating, puck control skills, shooting, passing and an understanding of the game.

Here is a list of helpful hints to remember before and during tryouts.

Players Checklist:

- Get on the rink a few weeks before the tryouts. Even if you are active during the summer, you need to get your “hockey coordination” tuned up.
- Get yourself into skating shape, no matter what age level you play.
- Talk to the coach in advance to get a better understanding of what competition you will be facing.

Do:

- Present your best effort during all activities.
- Remain calm and pay close attention to instructions.
- Make sure your equipment is in great shape.
- Always be on time and ready to go.
- Be relaxed, go out and have a lot of fun.

Don't:

- Be nervous or anxious.
- Enter tryouts without being in skating shape.
- Be afraid to ask questions.
- Forget that an all out effort is important.
- Forget to have fun.
- Forget it is truly only a game.

Parents Checklist:

- Find out the organization's policies and procedures at tryouts.
- Assist your child in getting some ice time well before tryouts begin.
- Ask who the coach is and how the players will be evaluated.
- Keep expectations realistic.
- Know your child needs to enjoy himself/herself and be relaxed.
- Remind your child this is not a matter of life or death.

Do:

- Keep the tryouts in the proper perspective.
- Keep everything positive.
- Have fun with your child.
- Stay calm for your child.

Don't:

- Create additional pressure for your young players.
- Get uptight during the tryout process.
- Create a negative environment.
- Set unrealistic expectations.

Activities in Preparation for Tryouts

- Get on the rink and skate. Concentrate on quick stops and starts; change of direction and tight hockey turns.
- Puck Control: handle the puck while skating; use your skates; front to back as well as side to side dribbles.
- Off rink: stick handle in your driveway using a tennis ball; wiffle ball or street hockey puck. Get on roller blades to get the rhythm of skating. Practice shooting the puck.

Both parents and players must remember it is not a matter of life and death. It is supposed to be a game all of us enjoy to play and watch. Pressure and unrealistic expectations are the biggest problem that a player has to deal with during the tryout process. Be calm, go out and have a ball!