

# Mite Training Model

Navy Youth Hockey Association

## Coaching Considerations

- Create a positive, fun and safe environment for the players
- Encourage active participation by all players
- Be clear and precise in communication and use terminology appropriate for the age
- Limit the amount of technical or tactical information to what is appropriate for the age
- Ensure that the ice surface size is in proportion to the age – cross-ice games
- Have a well-structured plan for each session
- Provide some opportunities that guarantee success for all participants
- Become knowledgeable with regards to the physical and mental capacities, and LTDA model
- Encourage all forms of creativity
- Encourage parents/players to explore other sports to assist long term hockey development
- Include planned coordination exercises with training sessions both on and off ice

## FUN

8-and-Under coaches should never underestimate the value of having fun. While this is true at all ages, it is especially true at this age, where the hockey-for-life seed is planted. If it's not consistently fun at this age, the novelty of the sport will wear off and the young player(s) may eventually quit. Players at this age should have fun every time they are on the ice.

## ENGAGEMENT

Coaches should recognize the importance of engagement. It goes hand-in-hand with fun, but it's more than just fun. It's targeting the optimal skill level for each player – not too easy and not too hard. It's designing small games that do the teaching. The players don't need a coach to provide the feedback. The games themselves give players the opportunity to successfully demonstrate targeted skills and concepts. The coach becomes the facilitator – less talking from the coach and more learning by doing.

## ACTIVE PRACTICES

Practices at this age level should include a high amount of activity and a low amount of rest. Players should not spend large amounts of time standing in line, waiting to participate in drills or games. Coaches should strive to design practices in which players are active for the majority of the practice. Coaches should set goals related to the amount of activity they expect each player to achieve in a practice (e.g., each player will be active for 40 minutes in a 60-minute practice). While the activity level

is not the only crucial component on which coaches should focus, it definitely is important in the long-term development process, as coaches must remember that players learn by doing (more than by watching or listening). Designing practices with high activity levels and opportunities for many repetitions is very important at this age. Refer to the Player Activity Chart found on the free Mobile Coach App and at [admkids.com](http://admkids.com) under Coaches/Repetition for a form to evaluate the developmental opportunities that occur for players in practice and in games.

## **STATION-BASED PRACTICES**

Station-based practices are an excellent way to accomplish these high-activity goals. Coaches are encouraged to split the ice into 4-6 areas with an age-appropriate skill, drill, or game to be practiced in each of area. A typical station-based practice would include six stations with 6-10 players at each station. While coaches have some flexibility when it comes to the duration of time that players spend at each station, 6-8 minutes is a good guideline for players at the mite level. Coaches should restrict the instructional part to less than a minute for each station. Players should practice the desired skill at each station, with coaches making sure that each player is active the majority of the time, thus receiving a high number of repetitions. Coaches may have to be creative to ensure that all players spend more time practicing the desired skill rather than waiting in line to participate. Coaches are encouraged to use a stopwatch to determine the amount of time a player is active and count the repetitions performed by an individual player at each station. USA Hockey has a large number of these station-based practice lesson plans available on the free Mobile Coach App and at [admkids.com](http://admkids.com)

## **AGE-APPROPRIATE TRAINING**

8-and-Under coaches must determine what skills and concepts are appropriate for the kids in their program to learn and understand. Most would not expect a second-grader to be taught sixth-grade math. The same should hold true for the skills and concepts related to mite hockey. First, coaches must determine whether the players are ready to learn the desired skill or understand the desired concept. Second, they should decide whether the skill or concept is truly important for an 8-year-old. Teaching players the right thing at the right age is crucial in their development. Cross-ice hockey, or hockey on a smaller surface (half-ice), is an important part of age-appropriate training for mites. Using a smaller surface in mite hockey games offers several benefits, including increased puck battles, increased puck-touches for all players, puck carriers will have to avoid more players in the small areas, etc. All of these benefits are extremely important in the long-term development of each player.

## **PRACTICE FOCUS**

Practices should focus on (percentage of time listed after each): 1. Individual skill improvement (hockey skills, activities, and games) — 85% 2. Hockey sense (teaching of concepts through small area games) — 15% 3. Systems (team-play training) — 0% **SMALL AREA GAMES** Coaches should utilize small area games on a consistent basis in every practice for fun, practicing skills and teaching basic concepts. These games should be included in station-based practices and there should be a variety of games for mite players. The number of players, rules of the game, and size of the game area should be varied with each game. Coaches might also opt to use blue (light-weight) pucks, balls or ringette rings to change the dynamic of the game. Refer to the Small Area Competitive Games Handbook and CD for age-appropriate small area games.

## OPTIMAL WINDOWS OF TRAINABILITY

In order for players to maximize their ability and reach their potential, it's important for youth coaches to do the right thing with young athletes at the right time. Focusing on these key components at the appropriate age will give the young athletes the best opportunity to achieve their potential as they progress through their teenage years. Researchers have concluded that players in this age classification should spend time developing the following capabilities related to their long-term development:

### Technical Development

#### *Skating*

- Ready position
- Forward stride
- Forward crossover
- Edge work
- 2-foot glide
- Forward turns
- Controlled stop
- Agility, balance and coordination
  - Two feet and single foot skating
  - High knee run, multi directional
  - Full body coordination: somersaults, roles jumps.
  - Upper and lower body separation: skating with should roles or exaggerated hand slides
- Forward start

#### *Puck Control*

- Lateral puck handling
- Forward-to-backward puck handling
- Diagonal puck handling
- Accelerating with the puck

#### *Pass and Receiving*

- Forehand
- Receiving – stick position, use of skates
- Eye contact

#### *Shooting*

- Wrist Shot

#### *Body Contact*

- Body positioning in confrontational situations
- Angling skills
- Poke check
- Life the stick check

## TEAM CONCEPTS

While the teaching curriculum recommends that no time be spent on teaching systems related to team-play in mite hockey, players should begin learning important skills and basic concepts that will be important when they get to an age where systems and team-play takes on added importance.

Players should learn and understand:

1. Puck Pursuit – Players should pursue the puck aggressively and engage in battles to gain possession of the puck.
2. Puck Support – Players should learn to make themselves available for a pass whether they are close to the puck or further away. This is the beginning of near- and far-support concepts, as well as creating and finding passing lanes.

## NUTRITION

Players should be introduced to:

1. Proper Hydration – Players should learn the importance of proper hydration before, during, and after all games and practices.
2. Good Eating Habits – Players should be encouraged to eat good meals and refrain from eating candy and other foods that lack nutritional value.
3. Recovery Drink – While there are many recovery drinks on the market, players should be encouraged to drink chocolate milk following any practice or game session.

### *Tactical Skills*

- Participants should learn how to listen and follow instructions
- Participants should engage in deliberate play and should learn basic decision making through activity games like tag and small area hockey games
- Competition at the puck – one-on-one battle and loose puck races for body positioning
- Participants should learn basic appropriate behavior within a team setting, such as how to support others and appropriate behavior in a locker room setting

### *Ancillary Skills*

- Off-ice training activities that provide several stations of purposeful games or activities
- Participation in other sport activities (gymnastics, public skating, skiing, soccer, lacrosse, swimming)
- Participants, parents and support persons should be well informed about proper equipment for practice (sizing, how to dress for training, water bottle for hydration, skate sharpening)
- Children should be able to dress themselves by the time they move into U10 (Squirt) age category

## *Detailed Progression for teaching Skating:*

- C-Cuts left foot / right foot
- C-Cuts alternating
- C-Cuts both feet
- C-Cuts pulling partner
  - Offers resistance
  - Helps players improve their C-Cut
- Slalom C-Cuts narrow
  - Similar to downhill skiing
- Slalom C-Cuts wide
- Slalom pulling a partner
  - Helps build strength
- C-Cuts Back foot cross-under
  - Works c-cut on the inside edge
  - C-Cut on the outside edge
    - Skate blade stays on ice the entire time
    - Heal drives downward
- C-Cuts Alternate cross-under
  - Both feet take turns performing the c-cut and cross-under
- C-Cute Heal only
  - Good exercise to work on strength of their push and quickness.
- Forward striding

Video Links:

Skating: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wh2jc6QzVn8&t=587s>