



WILTON YOUTH FIELD HOCKEY

PARENTS' GUIDE

Thank you all for supporting Wilton Youth Field Hockey and encouraging your players to participate in this great sport. We are really looking forward to seeing you throughout the season!

Updated 2026

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WYFH Philosophy

Mission:

Wilton Youth Field Hockey is a not-for-profit volunteer organization whose purpose is to develop youth players, grades K-8, into competitive, well-rounded athletes, while promoting respect, sportsmanship and a love for the sport of field hockey.

Vision:

The Wilton Youth Field Hockey Program is a **developmental program** providing age appropriate training and competitive play that enables players to grow to their fullest potential and provides them with the guidance to evolve as a player and a “**Warrior**”.

Values:

Transparency, accountability, community, player-centric focus

Our Organization

WYFH is led by a volunteer board. WYFH recognizes the need to continue to engage our membership and increase the size of the board. Our board is updated annually to reflect the needs of our organization and as families roll off when players age out of the program. Our current officers are on our website. We are always looking for volunteers to help manage, promote and expand our organization and its offerings. Please reach out to any Board member if you have a desire to pitch in; no amount of time is too small, we will find something you can help with!

Fairfield County Youth Field Hockey League

Wilton Youth Field Hockey is a member of the Fairfield County Youth Field Hockey League (FCYFHL). The FCYFHL was created in 2021 with the intent to promote the sport of field hockey to youth in a competitive, fun, and safe environment where they can learn the basic essentials of the sport. The association is for towns that reside in Fairfield County. The towns involved created a governing board which includes a representative from each town. This gives all towns that are involved, an equal say in decisions that are made.

League Rules

- Game length for team vs. team will be 50 minutes (two 25 minute halves) running time or four 12-minute quarters. .
- Modified USA Field Hockey rules are used as guidelines when playing our games. These rules can be found at <https://www.usafielddhockey.com/rules-of-hockey>
- Towns are responsible for their own referees.
- Players must be a resident of the town they will be playing for unless there is no youth program offered.
- Every player must wear shin guards and a mouthguard while playing in games or jamborees. Corner masks or goggles must be worn during defensive corners.

Code of Conduct

- The FCYFHL promotes the concept of good conduct by all participants including players, coaches, referees, parents and spectators.
- This concept will provide a safe athletic environment, good role models and a sense of community spirit throughout the league.
- FCYFHL participants are to maintain and promote the highest standards of conduct at all times. By doing this, FCYFHL will prove that good conduct and competitive sports can co-exist.

Everyone will:

1. Respect all players, coaches, referees, parents and spectators.
2. Respect the property of others, including all fields.
3. No taunting, booing, or making negative comments about any players, coaches, referees, parents and spectators.
4. Never argue with the referee's call.
5. Remember that sports for children should be about having fun.

Players will:

1. Play for fun.
2. Work hard to improve skills, learn the game and play by the rules.
3. Follow coaches directions and instructions.
4. Always respect teammates, opponents, coaches and referees.
5. Support teammates at all times.
6. Shake hands with opponents after the game.

Parents & Spectators will:

1. Remember that children participate in athletics to have fun.
2. Remember that the game is for the children, not for the adults.
3. Remember that they are not the coach and will refrain from yelling instructions out onto the field.
4. Speak to the coach in private with any concerns and never in front of the children or on the field.
5. Be a positive role model by respecting all players, coaches, referees, parents and spectators at all times.
6. Value skills development, fair competition and good effort. Recognize that the efforts of all children, your own team and opponents, are more important than the outcome of the game.
7. Cheer for all children on the team, not just your own child.
8. Not encourage any behaviors or tactics that would endanger the health and well-being of anyone.
9. Not engage in any behavior that is reasonably considered to be harassing or disruptive to the team or the program.

Coaches will:

1. Make skill development, sportsmanship, teamwork, fun and learning the game the goals of the team.
2. Be a positive role model by respecting all players, coaches, referees, parents and spectators at all times.
3. Learn and play by the rules of the game.
4. Never argue with a referee's call.
5. Never lose your temper.
6. Be generous in any praise, emphasizing the children's efforts over the outcome of the game.
7. Be fair, honest and consistent in coaching philosophies and practices.
8. Recognize that children learn differently and adapt coaching according to each child's needs.
9. Communicate clearly to players and parents about goals for the team and what behavior is appropriate.
10. Provide a safe environment for the children to play.

Out-of-Town Player Policy

Wilton players will be given priority placement in the program, provided they have timely completed registration. Registration for non-Wilton players will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to available roster space. Once team rosters have reached capacity, additional out-of-town applicants will be waitlisted and may be referred to neighboring town programs with availability.

Program Instruction & Coaches

WYFH player instruction is divided between parent volunteer coaches at the intramural (K-4th grade) level and paid coaches responsible for the 5th-8th grade Travel teams. Each season, WYFH supports volunteer primary and assistant coaches for grades K-4 and an additional staff of paid Travel coaches for the 5th-8th grade teams.

To train our younger players, parent volunteers give their time, energy and dedication to support the K - 4th grade groups. Without the support of our volunteers, WYFH would not be able to support the robust volume of participants we are fortunate to attract. If you would like to become a volunteer coach, please contact our President, Vice President or any member of the board.

WYFH is dedicated to providing our coaches with training and support throughout the season. Led by the Wilton Youth Field Hockey Head Coach and Player Development Director, WYFH provides coaches clinics as well as coaching plans to assist in planning practices and training players.

With respect to our 5th-8th grade programs, our objective is to recruit and hire the strongest coaches possible. Countless hours are spent networking and searching for strong candidates across Fairfield County and local colleges. In the event that a coach does not meet our expectations, we do the following:

- Intervene in a timely manner
- Provide support and direction to the coach
- Add resources to assist the situation

- In an extreme case, we remove the coach

The single most challenging part of managing the WYFH programs is that there is a relatively limited pool of qualified coaches in the area for our 5th-8th grade program so we strive to build networks, utilize contacts, offer competitive fees and strive to maximize retention of high quality coaches as well as continuous improvement.

Team Managers are responsible for the first aid kit and gear for practices and games. This will include goalie gear where appropriate though the coach has the authority to determine whether an actual player transports the goalie gear back and forth for each practice or game.

If a child is injured, the coach will administer care to the player and either will make any necessary phone calls to 911, parents, etc. if warranted or designate another adult or Team Manager to take action.

Player Development

WYFH is based on a developmental philosophy. This philosophy is also consistent with the Fairfield County Youth Field Hockey League. As such, our goal is to offer programming to help each player develop to their fullest potential. Whether your child joins in Kindergarten or 8th, they will have an opportunity to build their proficiency and love of the sport.

Wilton Youth Field Hockey player development is overseen by the WYFH Program Director:

- Establish and oversee a formalized training program for grades K-8
- Oversee coaching from the review and training of our hired 5th-8th coaches to the training and support of our volunteer coaches
- Coach the 8th grade Blue Travel Team with special attention on preparing our middle school players for high school
- Lead clinics, camps and new programs

Programs

K, 1st & 2nd Grade Overview

All K-2 clinics are led by parent volunteer coaches. Coaches will be supported by the WYFH Program Director through coaching clinics and provided practice plans customized for each grade level of player. This is a clinic-based program where players learn the fundamentals of the game as a group.

3rd & 4th Grade Overview

The goal of the 3rd & 4th Grade program is to offer young players an introduction to the sport that is both engaging and skill-based. As many will be picking up a stick for the first time, we offer a low pressure, fun and encouraging experience. As they develop across the season, more competitive game-like experiences are incorporated into the schedule. In this clinic format, coaches work together to teach the fundamentals of the game. At this level, it is important to understand that players must train in the core skills with an emphasis on safety before competitive experiences are integrated.

5th & 6th Grade Overview

5th and 6th grade players come together on grade level or mixed teams, depending on the number of players registered for the season and the overall needs of the program. However, the League philosophy continues to be based around a 5/6 program and game play is reflective of this general pattern (i.e., regardless of how WYFH comprises teams, we expect that many teams from other towns will follow a 5/6 and 7/8 structure). WYFH has moved to paid coaches beginning at this level, however an annual review of the program needs will be taken into account when staffing decisions are made. In keeping with the League philosophy, the 5/6 program is about building a foundation of teamwork, skill development and competitive game experiences through a mix of intramural and travel games.

Players will play all positions to develop an understanding of the total game, working as a team and reaching individual and group goals, while continuing to foster a love of the sport.

We strive for balanced teams taking into account skill level of players, grade and overall team dynamics. In the WYFH 5/6 program, we strive for equal playing time for each player, however, if a player misses practices or games, equal playing time is not a guarantee. At the end of the day, a player's commitment to field hockey, their sportsmanship/leadership and application of consistent effort and focus during practices and games may earn them more opportunities over others. Please note that we did not reference anything about the skill level of a player. **Commitment, attitude and effort are the attributes recognized in this program.** In addition, it is very important to note, the 5/6 program is not about winning games. It is about developing a complete player and successful team dynamics. It is a FCYFHL mandate that we do not post scores in the Youth program in order to keep the focus on developing players not numbers on a board.

7th & 8th Grade Travel Overview

7th and 8th grade players will be placed on grade level or mixed teams, depending on the number of players registered for the season and the overall needs of the program. The goal of the 7th and 8th Grade Travel program is to increase each player's individual and team skills in a competitive environment, while fostering a love for the game. Players are encouraged, challenged and expected to work hard and be committed to their teams. In this program, players graduate to a higher level of coaching as they are ready for more challenge, independence and preparation for playing the sport in high school. Overall, WYFH teams compete against town programs from across the FCYFHL.

7th & 8th Grade Travel teams are led by hired coaches selected based on their experience in the sport as well as youth coaching ability. Coaches are identified and evaluated by the WYFH Board and the WYFH Program Director.

The Travel program is designed to help each player reach her full potential. Obviously, not every player will make the Blue (A) team. It is very important to communicate to your player that it does not matter what team they play on in 7th and 8th grade. **What matters most is their effort and commitment every day to become the best player they can be both as an individual and a teammate. That commitment, and only that, will prepare them to play in high school should they choose to continue with the sport at that level.**

At the start of the season, teams will be identified through a 2-3 day evaluation process which includes assessment during drills and scrimmages. These evaluations are mandatory and there will be separate evaluations for 7th and 8th grade. If you miss an evaluation day, you are automatically disqualified from being considered for the Blue (A) team, absent extraordinary circumstances. If an evaluation day is missed due to such extraordinary circumstances and the player attends the first 2 practices for the White (B) team, the player will be further evaluated and, in the discretion of the Program Director and the Coach, the player may have the opportunity to move to a different team. In addition, for this evaluation process, **ALL players must submit a signed Travel Commitment Letter.**

If your player would like to be considered for the BLUE (A) Team, field hockey must be their #1 priority over any other sport or activity (including dance, theater, etc.) If your player CANNOT commit to this requirement, they must communicate this to the 7/8 Travel coordinator and League Director PRIOR TO THE FIRST DAY OF EVALUATIONS.

Travel coaches determine A & B placement taking into account 3 core factors when evaluating players:

1. skill
2. effort
3. attitude

Coaches will assign players to teams based on what they see on the field during the evaluation sessions. Players are then assigned to either the Blue (A) Team or one or more White/Black (B) Teams. **There are NO CUTS.** Following evaluations, Team Assignment Letters will go out to each player via e-mail from the WYFH board within 2 days of evaluations. We do not post rosters until all e-mails have been sent.

For Blue (A) team players, all practices and games are mandatory. Another sport or activity is not considered a reason to miss a game or practice. If there is another reason why your player must miss a practice or game (illness, injury, school or family commitment, for example), it will be left to the coaches' discretion how these situations will be handled. Unexcused absences will lead to removal from the Blue Team.

FOR ALL PLAYERS, practice is mandatory and attendance will affect decisions made by the coaches come game time. It must be understood by all 7th and 8th grade Travel players, no matter what team they play on, that their effort, commitment and attitude will ultimately dictate starting line-ups and amount of playing time. As such, 7th & 8th grade Travel teams **do not** guarantee equal play. While we encourage all players to participate who have interest in the sport, this is not a social event. They are here to play field hockey and it is important to recognize the distinction. Players detracting from positive team dynamics, affecting player morale or disrupting other players or coaches will be reprimanded. In more significant cases, parents will be notified and, if an agreeable solution cannot be determined, a player may be dismissed from the team and WYFH program.

Parents or players who are unhappy with their player's team placement should review the foregoing material and WYFH's philosophies and values. Our organization strives to provide a great program for players of all levels and we understand there will be disappointment from time to time. However, we will not tolerate parents engaging in disruptive or unproductive communications as a

result of dissatisfaction with your player's team placement. Behavior that violates these policies may result in a cancellation of registration and a prohibition on future registrations.

Refunds

Please see our website for our current [Refund Policy](#).

Team Managers

Team Managers for Intramurals (K – 4th Grade)

As these teams are coached by volunteers, the coach also acts as team manager and will manage communications and handle logistics during the season unless they decide to delegate this role.

Team Managers for 5th-8th Grade Travel

The role of the team manager is to act as key liaison with the hired coaches, parents and the WYFH board. This allows our coaches to focus on players. The manager role is to manage communications and handle logistics during the season. They are also there to aid parents and share concerns with the Board in a timely fashion.

1. Be responsible for bringing equipment (ball bag, cones, med kit) to and from practices and games.
2. Email parents to introduce yourself and let them know that they should come to you with any team concerns rather than to the coach.
 - a. Should that happen, please let a member of the Board know so we can help address the issue.
 - b. Parents should not direct complaints to the coaches. 5th-8th grade players need to learn to advocate for themselves and communicate with their coach directly. Should there be an issue that goes beyond a player's ability to resolve on their own, parents should then approach their key contacts: Team Manager, WYFH President or Board Member.
3. We encourage managers to track stats at games take pictures and share with WYFH for posting on social media (so long as media waivers have been secured).
4. Some of the managers plan and coordinate team dinners, tailgates and other social events during the season. This is not required but is a lot of fun for the team and provides great opportunities for team bonding. If you can assist with this or pass it off to another parent on the team it would be greatly appreciated by all.

If you are interested in becoming a Team Manager, please e-mail the WYFH President at wiltoneyouthfieldhockey@gmail.com.

Communication With Parents

The team manager should be the first point of connection for parents with any issues or concerns regarding their player, the coach or other matters. If the team manager is unable to adequately address the issue, the team manager should involve a member of the WYFH Board or the parent can contact a member of the WYFH Board directly.

In all circumstances, please do not approach any of the above individuals regarding an issue with team players nearby.

If your issue relates to a game situation, please wait 24 hours and then reach out as noted above. We feel the 24 hours will allow a “cooling off period” to have a more productive discussion from all parties. For inquiries regarding team placements, please see previous section regarding travel program overview.

Overall, we also ask you to remember that WYFH is managed by volunteer members who take significant amounts of time from their own families and lives to provide the services enjoyed by our players and FH community. We are always open to your constructive feedback as well as willingness to volunteer.

Fields & Resources

Turf time is like gold and there is very little of it available to our program in Wilton. Wilton Parks and Recreation Department allocates fields and dictates schedules. WYFH does not control this process. We submit field requests in advance of our program start dates but those requests are only honored once high school program needs are met.

Parks & Recreation Guidelines for Field Assignments

High school sports and high school programs such as the marching band are given first priority on turf and grass fields. Once their needs are met, remaining field time is then split between youth sports organizations. Youth field hockey and youth football share the Stadium turf and work closely to maximize field usage. **The only option to increase WYFH turf access is to build another turf field.** There have been several efforts over the years which have failed due to low voter turnout. This is a frustrating situation for WYFH and we can assure you that we do our best to coordinate the most turf time we can for all of our grades.

WYFH posts camp, practice and game schedules once field assignments are confirmed by Wilton Parks & Recreation. Schedules are subject to change at any time based on high school program needs or field maintenance plans. We understand that this is not ideal and respectfully ask for your patience when these situations arise. We do our best to anticipate conflicts, maneuver quickly when they occur and make alternate plans to prevent disruptions to the program.

Please check www.wiltonyouthfieldhockey.org for a list of field locations, directions as well as the most up to date group/team schedules.

Pre-season Camp & Special Clinics

Annually, WYFH offers a preseason camp for grades 5-8th with age appropriate groupings. Typically planned for the week or so before WYFH 7th and 8th grade evaluations, WYFH brings together a group of top coaches to run a high quality, skill-based program.

In the off season, WYFH offers special clinics with expert coaches for the various age groups to add to their training and competitive play experience. We offer weekly winter clinics, weekly spring clinics and free summer pickup games.

Uniforms

WYFH allows parents to directly purchase the official WYFH uniform for Grades 5 - 8. **The cost of the uniform is separate from the registration fee. Pricing will be provided when registration opens.**

Players in grades 5 - 8. wear a single uniform style. This is with the hopes that players can wear their uniforms for multiple seasons and so that players can pass them down once outgrown. When a style is discontinued, we aim to find the closest possible match so that players can continue wearing their existing uniforms.

Uniforms for 5/6 and 7/8 should be ordered prior to July 31 (or the specific date as set forth in any email communication by WYFH) to allow enough time for orders to be processed and delivered before the season starts. Uniforms will be distributed at a team practice ahead of the first game.

The K – 4th grade programs will be given a reversible pinnie to use as their uniform and to all practices. When ordering their uniform, players in grades 5 - 8 should also order a reversible pinnie to be worn at all practices.

Practice & Game Schedules

All practice schedules will be posted in the Sports Engine App once field schedules are confirmed by Wilton Parks & Recreation. You will need to check your player's schedule to note any changes. Players are expected to RSVP to all practices and games. This function is critical when coaches are planning practices and gameplay.

5th – 8th grade game schedules rotate between Saturdays and Sundays based on field assignments at home and away. WYFH will issue a travel schedule as soon as teams are assigned and FCFYHL schedules are confirmed. In season games may be added throughout the season as games are scheduled and rescheduled depending on field, coach, player, ref and tur availability. End of season jamborees typically occur during the last week of October/first week of November (depending on the calendar) and are not scheduled until the week prior.

Equipment

Required Field Hockey Equipment

- Stick
- Molded Mouth Guard
- Field Hockey Shin Guards

CHOOSING A STICK

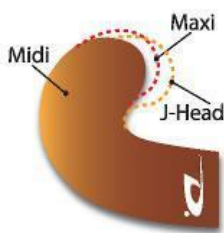
The price of a good field hockey stick may be in direct relation to the quality of the materials and the inherent power. Players with less than several years of experience may not yet have developed the skills needed to utilize an advanced level stick to its full potential and should choose a stick that fits their level of play.

Weight

Composite sticks are very powerful. It is not always necessary to follow weight guidelines as closely as with wood sticks and is a personal preference. Defenders generally prefer heavier sticks and the forward players prefer lighter sticks – ie. dribblers like lighter, quicker sticks while hitters need more power (heavier sticks or weight balanced more toward the head).

Head Shape and Bend

Head shapes to consider when choosing a stick are the Midi, Maxi and J-Head. Many players enjoy the J-Head as it offers more playing surface, and the J-Head curves up into a J-shape. Players that dribble often prefer the Midi head for a quicker stick. The Maxi and J-Head are $\frac{1}{4}$ " longer than the Midi.



Less bend can help with stick control and avoid unintentional lifts. A heavy bend can help with scoops and aerals, and a low bend is desirable for drag flicks.

Sizing Methods

A longer stick may seem desirable, but if it is too long two problems will become immediately noticeable. First, the longer stick may cause undercutting of the ball, leading to frequent raised balls. The second problem is excessive hard contact with the playing surface, causing fracture of the stick head. This is not considered a manufacturer defect and is not covered under warranty.

Dutch Sizing Method

(Preferred method for the best control)

Hold your stick upside down, with the head in the air, insert the head in your arm pit, as if the stick was a crutch. A real crutch would reach the floor, while your stick ends somewhere near your knee. Stand up straight and have another person help with the fitting, or use a mirror.



Where the end of the handle is in relation to your knee is the key to proper fit. The end of the handle should fall between the middle of your knee cap to no more than two inches below the bottom of the knee cap.

You may be amazed at how much your ball control will improve. Also, you are a lot less likely to cause unwanted lifted balls and broken stick heads. Most Dutch elite players use a 36.5" stick and adjust their grip if it is a little long, or bend their knees more if they are taller. IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, DUTCH PLAYERS KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT USING A STICK!

American Sizing Method

This is a general sizing chart and may vary per person.

PLAYER HEIGHT	STICK LENGTH
4'3" and under	31"
4'3" to 4'6"	32"
4'6" to 4'9"	33"
4'9" to 5'	34"
5' to 5'2"	35"
5'2" to 5'7"	36"
5'2" to 5'10" *	36.5"
5'7" to 5'10" **	37"
Over 5'10" **	38"

*Most commonly used length is 36.5"

**Some elite, international players continue to use a 36.5" stick at 6'4" and 6'6" with superb ball control – ask a few former Dutch Olympians.

Power vs. Forgiveness

Players should start off with a more forgiving stick. It has more control than power and is much easier to receive the ball. As they develop more skill they can progress into more powerful sticks. Wood sticks are the most forgiving, but players that start with wood have to re-learn to play when they move into composite sticks as they have an entirely different 'feel' on the ball. Composites allow more power, but as harder composite materials are used inside the stick the forgiveness level decreases in direct proportion to the power increase, like a sliding scale.

