

## Practice Efficiencies

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Ice time is one of the most valuable recourse we have for our players' development. As coaches we have the responsibility to use this limited time wisely.

To get things off on the right foot, it is vital to plan ahead. Spend five minutes with your other coaches prior to stepping on the ice to cover each person's responsibilities. Each coach should understand the drills involved and have the necessary equipment set aside to run them (cones, tires, balls, etc.).

The coaches control the fun factor for the kids. If we want to create a passion for hockey, Coaches should always remember the simple truth about our game: If kids don't love it, they won't play it or excel at it. This is especially true for our Mite and Squirt aged players, but we must understand that even the big kids must have fun at practice.

Keep your instruction time short and to the point. Every minute you stand there speaking to the kids is time taken away from them improving their abilities as players. Get them organized quickly, demonstrate and get them involved. Next, be active as a coach when the drills are in progress. This allows for more individual instruction, and lets the players that are doing it well gain repetitions.

Be positive and upbeat in your communication with the players, especially with the Mites and Squirts. How you say something is just as important as what you say. Try to catch every player doing something right in practice, especially effort. If you want hard working players, reward hard work.

Take advantage of the time it takes for the coaches to set up the next drill by having the players improve their balance, coordination and agility by having them do a quick somersault or jumping jacks on the ice before they grab water. For the older players have them sprint a hard lap while the coaches get organized for the next drill.

Include at least one activity game or small area game in every practice. These games develop hockey sense and hockey instincts as well as promote competitiveness. They also increase the tempo of your practice. If you notice that things are sluggish try inserting a small area game into the mix and see how quickly you regain the players' intensity.

Lastly, be cognizant of the amount of down time each your players are having in practice. Try to shoot for a minimum of at least 50 percent activity during the practice session. This is not easy so as an initial exercise, have your parents keep track of the time spent by using this downloadable form:

<http://usahockey.cachefly.net/Player Activity Tracking.pdf>

For a visual of some additional practice efficiencies check out this video:

<http://usahockey.cachefly.net/Practice Efficiency1.wmv>