



Junior Section- U10 Rules of Competition 2026-2027

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1. Introduction

Under 10's is a year-round player development season. With the number of rinks in the UK and the limited ice time available, the traditional winter hockey season is always very congested with fixtures. U10 players can register year-round, so Learn to Play programs and playing opportunities are not restricted by registration and transfer deadlines or regular league seasons – they can play whenever they get the chance.

Clubs are encouraged to allocate as many U10 fixtures as they can, across the year when possible.

It is understood that some Junior clubs shut down for a period in the summer. These clubs would be required to operate their cross-ice program during the regular season. Clubs will be expected to accommodate the U10's program within their club training structure.

When planning and scheduling their U10 game day fixtures clubs will need to consider:

- The date when U10 players will change age groups and move up to U12
- U12 player registration dates, league season dates and deadlines
- Any summer club/rink shutdown periods that will impact on U10 playing opportunities – it may be that during your own clubs' shutdown period, your U10's can benefit from playing at other club's game day events
- School holidays may impact players, managers and coaches' availability

The League & Transfer deadline for ALL players, for league participation is 31 January. This also applies to clubs who have two teams in the league. A player cannot transfer from one team to another in the same club after 31st January.

2. Administration

Under 10 teams are placed in groups, with four teams per group. Clubs are grouped geographically to reduce travel time and costs as much as possible.

Each regional group will have a balanced mix of Division 1 and Division 2 Clubs to expose D2 players/parents/coaches to D1 environment and to share best practice between clubs.

Rinks with a small ice surface are placed in groups with rinks with larger ice surfaces to ensure all players benefit from the additional centre ice practice.



No group should include more than one club with a small ice surface. New rinks/new teams may be added as required. Clubs are encouraged to seek additional games outside of their group.

To ensure all Clubs are contributing ice time and are able to participate, no minimum numbers are required to enter a team (clubs must borrow and loan players to fill the teams).

Clubs that have enough players, enough coaches and enough ice time for 2 full teams can enter 2 teams if they comply with the following:

- 26 registered players are required to be able to enter two teams consisting of 3 lines of four players plus one netminder.
- There is a minimum of 13 registered players per team.
- U10 teams are not playing in competitive Division 1 and Division 2 leagues so neither team should be defined as a 1st or 2nd team. They must be balanced in numbers, age range and ability so that the 3-line rotation works when playing other clubs.
- Clubs with less players are grouped with clubs that have more, so all get more ice time by sharing.

Player Registration

New to the sport Under 10 players are allowed to register at any time, including after the transfer deadline so they can play in U10 game days as soon as possible.

The transfer deadline remains for existing U10's to not affect U12 league teams. Please refer to the Junior Rules of Competition for more information.

Ice Time Requirements

Each club must provide a set amount of ice time to facilitate Under 10's fixtures. More information can be found in Appendix A.

As with all other age groups, Clubs must allocate ice time and commit to fulfil all EIH fixtures. Each game slot should be a minimum of 1 hour 30 minutes and maximum of 2 hours duration. Clubs will be expected to work with the Fixtures Secretary to schedule the game days using the ice time provided. Clubs then use additional ice slots, if available, to schedule extra EIH sanctioned cross ice game days against teams from other groups to provide variety to players.

EIH U10 game day fixtures are not expendable challenge games. There is an expectation that these are to be treated the same as all other junior games irrespective of age. Clubs must not use the minimum requirement as justification to only allocate 3 slots. Clubs that have previously allocated 6 or 8 home ice slots to Under 10's are expected to continue to do this.

Only IHUK registered players can take part in EIH fixtures. Gameday must be used to produce a team list for every fixture.

3. Department of Player Safety

Any discipline issues to be reported to the DOPS Team within 48 hours of the game to allow investigation.

4. Game Day

The Playing Rules for Under 10's have been tested and developed over time in many leading countries around the world. The rules and guidelines need to be read, understood and implemented by everyone involved.

Coaches and Managers may find these rules hard to start with. They must cope with many complicated situations where they need to be thinking on their feet.



There should be a lot going on all over the ice surface and all at the same time. Coaches may have to plan and run 2 or 3 hours of skill drills and activities.

They are working with other coaches and players that they don't know. They need to be a coach, a referee, a bench coach and a cheerleader. Coaches from both teams are expected to support the successful running of the session.

Gameday rules can be found in Appendix C

Duration and Timing of Games

The length of the games is determined by the amount of ice time available. The home team is responsible for ensuring the games are properly timed and must arrange for a timekeeper.

Each game should be timed to ensure every player gets equal playing time. To help run the games efficiently a buzzer for the start and end of the game and buzzers for the line changes should be used.

Line Changes

Changes are made on the buzzer only. This is to ensure equal ice time and to keep players on the appropriate ability line. At the signal from the timekeeper the lines will change.

The maximum length of the shift is 60 seconds running time. The lines will play at even skill level. The net minder can also change on the buzzer

Penalties

The penalties in U10 games are the same as with other EIH junior leagues. It is important for the players' safety and the flow of the game that the rules are taught and enforced. The person refereeing the game is responsible for this. Referees do not just call penalties but also help instruct players about the rules.

When a player violates the rules of the game:

- The nearest referee will stop the offending player and explain what they have done wrong, while the second referee continues to oversee the game.
- Although no penalties are recorded, if necessary, the game official can remove a player from the game for the remainder of the shift (the player is returned to the bench area, where the bench coach explains the reason for the penalty.)
- If a player continuously violates the rules, the L2 coach from the player's team should remove him or her for the remainder of the game and substitute a new player in his or her place.
- In all situations it is important that the player understands what they have done wrong.
- Bodychecking is NOT allowed in U10 matches.

Face Off

Face-offs will take place in the centre of the playing surface at the beginning of the game, as well as:

- After a goal
- When changing the players
- After a break in the play

Coaches may wish to mark a face off dot on the ice.

The Level 2 coach acting as referee oversees the face off. When possible 2 coaches referee each game. Coach/Referees to drop a puck as soon as a player from each team is at the faceoff point and ready, do not wait for teams to be set-up in a face-off formation as this can take up valuable playing time. Call the nearest player from each team to face-off.



Coach/Referees should carry more than one puck, especially when working a one-man system. This allows them to restart the game straight away on a stoppage or goal rather than having to collect the puck and then skate back to the faceoff point.

When there is a line change, a goal is scored, the puck is frozen by the Netminder or the puck goes out of play, the Referee blows the whistle and tells the players, "Face Off":

- With a one-man system the referee quickly restarts the game with a quick face off at the centre of the playing surface.
- With a two-man system the nearest Referee quickly restarts the play with a face off at the centre of the playing surface. The first puck can then be collected as the game continues ensuring the maximum amount of playing time.

Scoring

There are two scoring options for Under 10's Ice Hockey matches:

- No scores are kept.
- Score is kept for each game, but no score is recorded or displayed.

The real emphasis is about developing skills, time on the puck and playing the game rather than judging the success purely on the results and scores. No statistics or league standings are to be recorded. Scores are not shown on the game time clock.

However, if scores in cross-ice games are kept this must only be as a tool to enhance the progression of the players and enhance the game environment. Participation medals or trophies are encouraged for each player who participates. (Some clubs give their guest players a medal to say thank you for playing for them). There are no medals or trophies based on wins.

Creating the Game Day Experience

Consideration should be given to creating a great game experience for the players and parents. Additions to the game experience could include:

- The teams being announced onto the ice
 - Fanfare music
 - Player names announced
 - Referees
 - The use of benches in the neutral zone for each team
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5. Rink Set Up

Reduced Playing Surface

All Under 10 games must be played on a reduced area ice surface. This is either cross ice or half ice. In most rinks this means U10 games are played across the ice in the end zones. Clubs with smaller size rinks may not be able to have the mid ice skills sessions, they may have games only on the ice.

Where specific problems exist with a venue such as no safety netting at the side of the rink, it may be necessary to place the goals facing down the ice. In this situation it is recommended that purpose-made rink dividers are used. If these are not available, then coaches must ensure slap shots are prohibited.

Examples of rink layout can be found in Appendix B

The Skills Zone

For maximum ice use and player development, players that are not playing should participate in skill drills for skating, stickhandling, passing and shooting in the centre zone. As with any practice session the Skills Zone drills must be pre-planned.



Skill drills, easy to understand, quick to teach, lots of repetitions. This zone should also be used as the player's bench. Coaches adjust the tempo and difficulty of the drills to suit the level of the players as they rotate through.

Some players get fatigued towards the end, so centre ice activities are then paced increasing the rest/work ratio. It is expected that a player rotates through the three zones. Game shift, skills zone, then rest.

On each full rotation, coaches can change the drill theme. It can take the players 2 or 3 turns to understand and do the skill drills properly. It may help the players to keep the same drill for a couple of changes or by keeping a similar drill and building on it at each change.

Coaches may find it easier to focus on one key skill such as skating for the whole of the first match, puck handling for the 2nd and passing for the 3rd etc.

Coaches from all the Clubs must work together. Coaches should not feel they can only coach the kids from their own club. There is a shared responsibility to ensure all the players are being taught and having fun. Coaches should also teach the players proper fair play and respect.

6. Officials

Team Officials

The host team must designate a coach & manager to be in charge of the event to ensure guidelines and protocols are adhered to. In line with IHUK protocols and Safeguarding policies only correctly trained, registered and DBS checked persons are to be in contact with the players, or allowed on the ice.

A Level 2 coach must always be in charge of each team at all times. Each team should provide at least 2 on ice coaches at all games.

Game Officials

Level 2 Team Coaches will act as the referees for the games.

There should be a minimum of four Level 2 coaches on the ice (1 from each team.) This allows for one Level 2 coach to be at each end officiating the games and one Level 2 coach organizing the Skills Zone.

Referee/linesman shirts can be worn if available to introduce the players to formal game officiating. Alternatively if local IHUK referees and linesman are available, they can be invited to officiate.

7. Equipment

The players being taught are small and in order for them to achieve maximum enjoyment and optimise their understanding of the skills, junior sized equipment should be used.

Cross-Ice Rink Dividers should be easy and quick to move on and off the ice surface and form a continuous barrier from the boards one side of the rink to the opposite side. They should be approximately 10 cm high and 5 cm wide.

Examples can be found in Appendix E. Child Sized Goal Nets should be used. This gives the goalkeeper a greater chance of success, which will in turn build confidence. 4 goals are required.

This also challenges the players to be better shooters in order to score. Regulation/adult size nets can only be used with inserts fitted. These inserts reduce the size to 130cm by 90cm.



The goals should be located one meter from the sideboards of the rink and halfway between the end boards of the rink and the cross-ice rink boards set up on the blue line. Suitable weights can be placed on the back of the lightweight goals to keep them in place.

Lightweight Blue Pucks should be used. These are the same size as a normal puck, although lighter, giving young players the opportunity to learn the game and develop their skills with a puck that is more in proportion to their size and strength.

8. Appendices

Appendix A: Under 10 Game Day Fixtures

Appendix B: Rink Layouts

Appendix C: EIH Playing Rules for U10s

Appendix D: Rink Divider Examples



Appendix A

Under 10 Game Day Fixtures

Each group of 4 teams should provide a minimum of 3 home fixtures (around 1 hour 30 minutes of ice each), with every team playing 3 games at each game day event. That works out to 4 clubs × 3 home slots = 12 game day fixtures per club, and across a minimum of 12 game days, 36 cross-ice games per team over the season. Clubs should also provide a minimum of 12 additional 1 hour 30-minute centre zone practice sessions per team, giving 18 hours of extra practice ice.

Group game days should be spread evenly across the season, so players get regular opportunities to play, and clubs are encouraged to add further game days on their remaining dates for variety. Where there are extended gaps between group games, additional IHUK-sanctioned cross-ice games should be added to fill them, and clubs should factor in face-off times and travel times when allocating slots to ensure they're realistic and suitable.



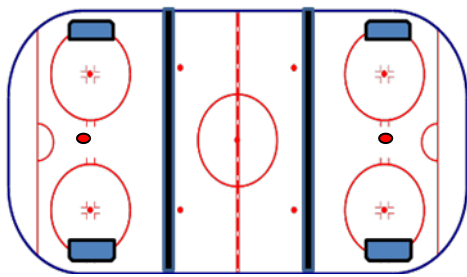
Appendix B

Rink Layouts

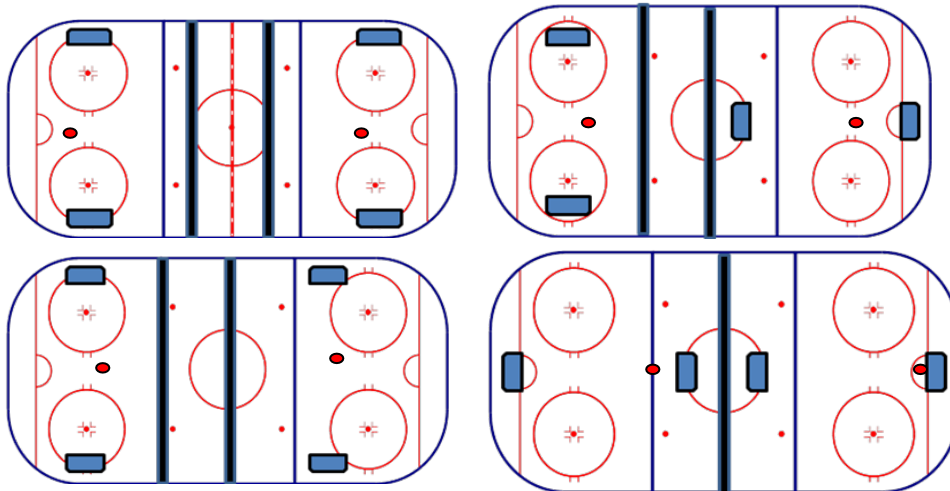
U10 Rink Lay Out Example



Standard Rink Cross Ice Set Up

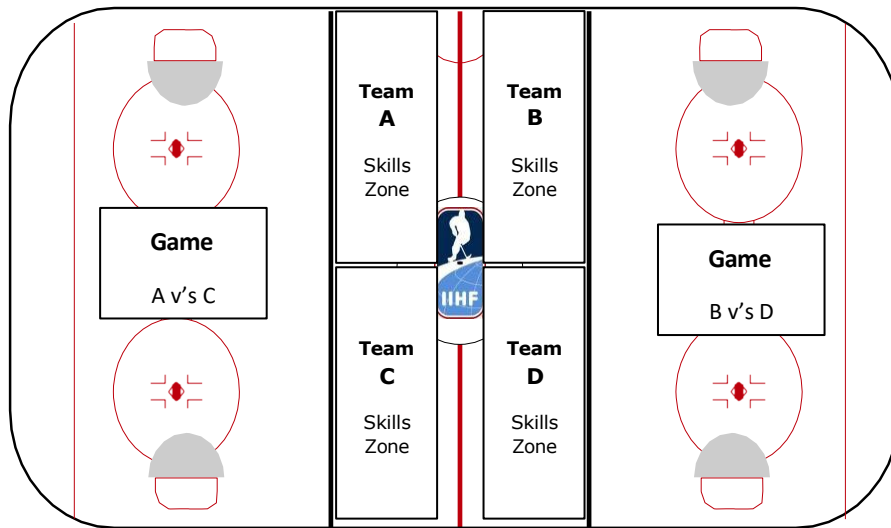


Smaller rink set up options:





Rink Layout with On-Ice Skills Zone





Appendix C

EIH Playing Rules for U10s

- All Under 10 games must be played on a reduced area ice surface.
- This is either cross ice or half ice.
- In the majority of rinks this means U10 games are played across the ice in the end zones. It is detrimental to the development of the players to sacrifice the skills practice in the centre zone just to increase the size of the playing surface.
- 4 teams attend each fixture, playing 3 lines on an equal 3 shift rotation.
- Each team plays 3 games at each game day event.
- A Team List must be produced from Game Day for every fixture.
- Game Sheets are not required.
- Each team takes their home and away (light and dark) kit to all the games.
- Only IHUK registered U10 players can take part in EIH U10 fixtures.
- All teams must play 3 skills aligned lines.
- It is not acceptable for a Club to refuse to borrow players if they do not take a full team to a game.
- Coaches must group players by ability, age and size:
 - Line 1: This is the strongest line consisting of the most able players – generally older players approaching the U12 age group.
 - Line 2: This is an intermediate line of those players who have been playing for a while and are generally more physically capable in their skating ability.
 - Line 3: This is predominately the less experienced and younger players.
- Clubs and Coaches must work together to get as many players icing as possible.
- All the players participating should be played evenly in every game.
- Coaches should keep lines at even strength.
- If a Club has a large U10 squad, they will have a rota for players to be included in the playing team.
- The number of players on each line is agreed before each game by the coaches.
- If you are on an Olympic size pad, then 5 on 5 may be best while if on a smaller surface 4 on 4 may be best.
- If playing 4 on 4: then 12 players plus a netminder is the minimum recommended number for each team.
- Coaches can be flexible, agreeing to use whatever combination works best for all the players.
- To increase the number of players that can attend each fixture coaches can put 5 players on a line but still play them as 4 on 4 by equally rotating players through the game play shifts. When it is their turn to miss a shift the players can join in with the skill zone activities.
- If playing 5 on 5, then take 18 players and 2 NM, if 4 on 4 then take 15 players and 2 NM.
- 2 Netminders can share the net.
- Netminders can change on the buzzer when the lines change, or rotate between game/rest/skills shifts.



Appendix E
Rink Divider Examples

