



U6 LEARN TO SKATE GUIDE TO SUCCESS For Coaches

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- Initiation of fundamental movement and development of physical literacy through general sport participation
- To introduce overall motor skills like balance, coordination, agility in a fun and safe environment that promotes self-confidence on skates
- To introduce all fundamental movement skills, including skating
- To develop an awareness of Ringette and create a welcoming environment for all participants

COMPLIANCE INFORMATION FOR U6 LEARN TO SKATE

- Focus on FUN!
- 100% Development
- Two or more coaches on the ice at all times
- No scores posted
- No positional play
- Emphasis on skating skills, introduction of basic ring skills
- Two minute buzzer should be utilized to introduce line changes within modified games
- One year-end event (with modified games) per player – e.g. three games on the ice at once, identical participation awards, off-ice activities – **where numbers require, a U6 Learn to Skate player may also participate in one year-end event with a team from an older division**

WHAT SKILLS DO WE FOCUS ON AT U6?

- Basic Skating Skills:
 - Basic stance, falling and getting up, edges, balance on skates, start, stop, walking all directions, forward/backward stride and glide

STARTING THE SEASON

- Work with your Association representative to identify objectives for the U6 group to work towards throughout the season
- Your Association may use Ringette Canada's ABC Program as a guide for their U6 Learn to Skate Program, if this is the case, a representative from your Association will be able to help you implement this program

PLANNING PRACTICES

- PLAN, PLAN, PLAN!!

- The most important thing you can do as a coach is to have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish – set out objectives for your season and for each practice
- Make sure you plan out your practice before you arrive at the arena!
- Practice plans should be developed with your long-term and short-term objectives in mind as determined in conjunction with your Association representative
- Make sure to always have enough coaches on the ice to properly execute your practice plan, otherwise it may need to be altered
- Nutrition after a practice
 - Have chocolate milk
 - Consider having a small snack available to the athletes after every ice time (granola bar, orange, raisins, etc.) to bring energy levels back up

RESOURCES

- Sample resources
 - Ringette Canada website – www.ringette.ca
 - Ringette Canada’s ABC Program
 - Be sure to register on the Ringette Canada Coaches’ page to gain access to the available coaching tools and resources, including demonstration videos
 - Your CSI (Community Sport Initiation) coaching clinic materials
 - The Ringette Canada Drill Manual (obtained at the CSI clinic or ask your Association for a copy)
 - The ORA website – www.ontario-ringette.com (see Coaching Resources)
 - U6 Learn to Skate Sample Season Plan
 - U6 Learn to Skate First Practice Plan
 - ORA ‘Drills for Skills’ document
 - ORA Skills Video – available from your Association
 - Your Region’s website may have helpful links
- Who can you go to for help in your Association/Region?
 - Your Association should identify these individuals at the beginning of the season (this list should be distributed at the coaches’ meeting)
- Use your resources!
 - Instructors don’t have to be coaches (parent who is a skilled skater but can’t commit to coach can lead a station at your practice – make sure to adhere to your Association’s volunteer screening policy)
 - Use older athletes when you can!
 - Be creative with the practice plans and drills you find

ATHLETE VOLUNTEERS

- In your Association there should be a pool of athlete volunteers who have various areas of expertise (e.g. skating, shooting, passing, goaltending, etc.)

- This is a great way to involve athletes who don't have the time to commit to being a full-time coach
 - Contact information for these athletes should be distributed to coaches at the start of the season and athletes can be contacted to come out to practices for any team who can use them
 - Some of the athlete volunteers may be able to make the commitment to be at every on-ice session for your U6 group
- Athlete volunteers should always be under the supervision of an adult coach
 - Many of these athletes may be in high school and looking to complete their requisite Community Involvement volunteer hours, so may ask you to sign their volunteer hours sheets when they come out to help
- Use these athletes on-ice to:
 - Assist with less-skilled players and to provide one-on-one instruction (one athlete volunteer could work with the same younger athlete all the time)
 - Demonstrate and correct skills/drills
 - Provide feedback to coaches/recommend drills
 - Set up/clear up drills
- Encourage these volunteers to run drills on their own
- Ask them for suggestions and really listen to what they have to say
- Coaches should give feedback to these athlete volunteers to let them know how they are appreciated and how they could improve

SKILL GROUPINGS

- Consider dividing your athletes into three groups – Learn to Skate, Intermediate, Most Experienced (as the season progresses, the Learn to Skate group will shrink as the athletes move into the more experienced groups)
- Consider combining practices with a U7 group if numbers allow
 - This gives you more coaches on the ice and allows for more specific groupings by skill ability – e.g. 6 stations, 6 different groupings, each group rotates through the stations, getting ability-specific instruction on the skills
- When you have just your own group on the ice:
 - Put your strongest coach with your weakest players
 - Divide into groups according to skill ability and number of instructors
 - Rotate through stations

MODIFIED GAMES

- Use the two-minute buzzer for shift changes
- 6 athletes per shift, one becomes the “goalie” and is allowed in the crease
- No scores posted!
- No goalie equipment!
- Coaches allowed on the ice
- Multiple games, same ice surface

- Try 3-on-3 in these limited areas
- Do-Overs!
 - Allow do-overs (e.g. an athlete who carries the ring over the blue line is allowed to try again)

HOW DO I MAKE IT FUN? ON-ICE

Fun Drills:

- Two teams, all of the rings start in the centre circle, each team has to bring the rings back to their own end, once centre rings are gone, each team tries to get the rings from the other team's end while being checked by the opposing team
- Keep-away (Buzzing Bees)
- Wonder Woman (Snow Queen) – skate as fast as you can to the blue line then dive on your belly
- Sharks and fishes
- Relay Races
- Any skill-challenging games (Who can score on the net from centre ice? Who can glide on one leg for the longest?)
- Ring in hand, “Bus drivers,” practices starts and stops
- Move pizza boxes by shooting rings at them
- Freeze tag, once tagged you must stop and wait for someone to touch you before you're allowed to move again
- Pick up the ring and throw it
- Put a net in the middle of the ice, have them skate around it with the ring and shoot into the net
- Hang a rubber chicken in the net – can you hit it?
- Follow the leader – along the lines – like a dance – everyone do what the player in front of you is doing
- Any modified game where every person has equal involvement (Ringette Canada Drill Manual has a lot of great ideas for this!)
 - Consider bringing in alternative objects to play with (e.g. soccer balls, beach balls, rubber chickens, frisbees, etc.), but keep in mind safety comes first
 - Make sure to consider the age and ability level of your athletes before selecting a game to play
- Try starting your on-ice session with a fun activity to encourage slow dressers to move more quickly so that they don't miss out on the fun
- Communicate with your athletes about what their favourite parts of on-ice sessions are and include more of them if possible
- Make the last activity “game-like” (e.g. 3-on-3 games across the ice for 2 groups – keep the middle ice for the Learn to Skate group – coaches on the ice to provide direction to the players as to when to pass the ring, shoot, etc.)
- Consider a parent vs. players game (make sure that all involved have the proper equipment – safety first!)

HOW DO I MAKE IT FUN? OFF-ICE

- Swimming, bowling, holiday parties
 - Halloween party to kick off the season
 - Holiday party
 - End-of-Season party
- Try out a different sport together (e.g. Flag Football, Ultimate Frisbee, etc.)
- Sleepovers
- Team cheers, team mascot, off-ice attire
- Team twinning with an older team, each team watches some of the other's games, the older can teach Association cheers to the younger, etc.
- Not all off-ice activities need to cost money – consider how you could use your local park for team-bonding activities
- Every time the team is together, try to do some social activity (could even be a 5 minute dance party, etc.)
- Recognize special events
 - Recognize each individual athlete during the season somehow

HOW DO I BECOME A BETTER COACH?

- Approachability
 - Be available to your athletes and their parents
- Be a student of the game
 - Volunteer to go on the ice with other teams in your Association at different levels to strengthen your understanding of the game
 - Watch practices and games at other levels
 - Adapt what you see to make it appropriate for your age level (including drills and games)
- Your yearly plan should be flexible
- Head Coach should be the first to arrive, last to leave
- Read and adhere to Bench Staff Code of Conduct

COACHES SHOULD MODEL USE OF RINGETTE EQUIPMENT

- Use a proper Ringette stick
- Wear approved gloves
- Model the use of an approved helmet

COMMUNICATION

- Language should always be positive and terminology should match the terminology in the Ringette Canada Drill Manual
- Observe, Correct, Encourage
- Intonation
 - Keep your tone upbeat
- Make sure that all of the coaches are on the same page about what is being communicated to the athletes

- During practices, Head Coach should be facilitating the entire practice – if there are stations, the Head Coach should be circulating to ensure that each one is running smoothly
- Never overload your athletes – give them bite-sized bits of information that they can focus on in order to improve – always end on a positive note
- With parents
 - Have a meeting with all of the parents at the start, middle, and end of the season, and any additional meetings you deem necessary
 - This should ensure that all the adults understand how the season will run
 - When a parent is upset, instate the “24-hour Rule”
 - This will allow both the parent and you as the coach to discuss the situation more calmly and productively
 - Do not discuss an athlete’s performance with any parent other than their own

CHANGE ROOMS

- Etiquette
 - Establish how athletes should treat each other in the change room
 - Two bench staff in the change room at all times
 - Develop a skate-tying and change room policy with your Association representative before the season starts that includes where and when parents can tie skates, who is allowed to enter the change room and at what times
- Proximity
 - Always be close to where your athletes are – if they are in the change room, be outside the door; if they are warming up somewhere, be where they are
 - Be aware of what your athletes are up to – i.e. that interaction is positive and activities are appropriate
 - Safety first!