



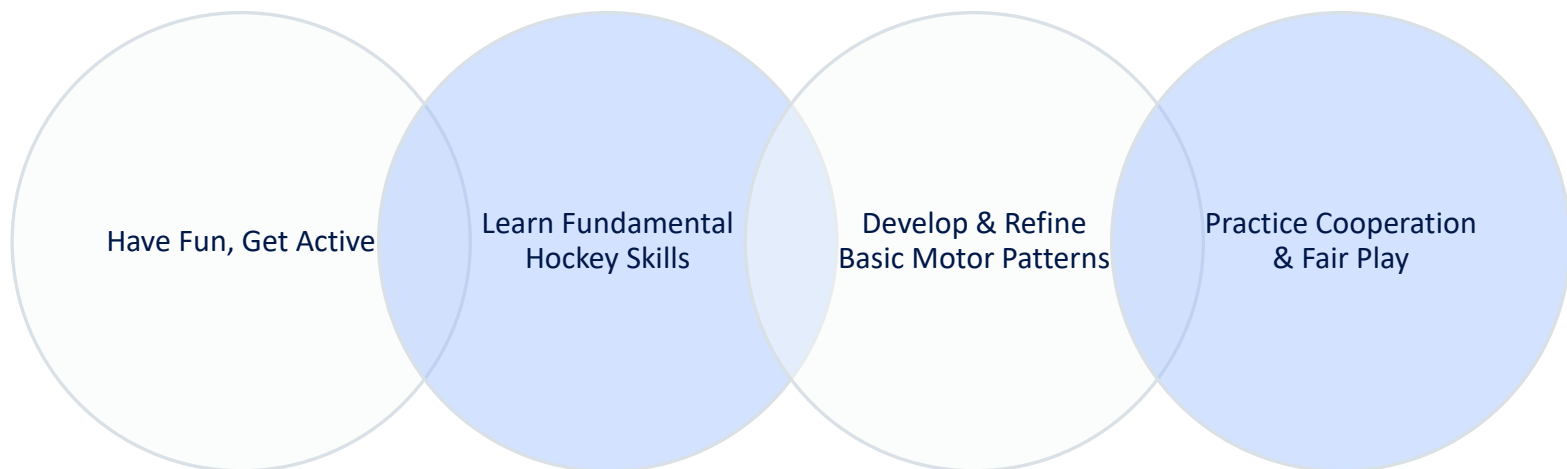
**U9 Program 2026/2027**



# U9 PROGRAM

U9 hockey is a key part of the foundation upon which the entire hockey experience is built. It is a crucial piece in building the skills of players at every level – players benefit from getting the ‘right start’ in the game.

- The first years of hockey need to be a positive experience. A fun and exciting start gives young players the opportunity to enjoy hockey for life.
- Kids become members of a team, develop self-confidence and experience personal achievement, all through fun and fair play.





# U9 PROGRAM

Players are part of a team and are expected to follow team rules and contribute positively to the team environment. Players should demonstrate respect for their teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, and parents at all times. They are expected to always give their best effort, as their teammates rely on them. Consistent attendance and active participation in practices help build the foundation of a strong work ethic and support both individual and team development.

- Players are divided into three tiers to ensure they compete and develop alongside players of similar ability, creating the best environment for growth, skill development, and enjoyment of the game.
- Two ice times per week
- One weekend game and one weekday practice
- 1 hour ice times
- 14-17 players per team
- Can attend up to two out of town tournaments per season
- Attends the Nitro Blast home tournament in March

Please note that players in the U9 Orange division will receive an additional weekday practice per week



# TEAM STRUCTURE

KMHA teams rely on the support and involvement of parent volunteers to provide a positive and successful experience for all players. Every team requires volunteers to assist with a variety of roles throughout the season, both on and off the ice. Parent participation helps ensure programs run smoothly and allows the association to continue offering quality hockey opportunities for the players. Please visit the *Volunteer* section of the KMHA website for details on volunteer requirements and how you can get involved.

U9 will follow a team model with all players on a team. Each team will require many volunteers, including the following.

- Head Coach (1)
- Assistant Coaches (2)
- Team Manager (1)
- On ice helpers (2+)
- Safety Person (1)



# U9 ORANGE PROGRAM

Formally Known as U9 Development

The purpose of this program is to provide a more competitive hockey experience for players seeking a higher level of play and commitment. Designed for advanced U9 players, the program offers increased opportunities for skill development, competition, and growth in a challenging environment. KMHA intends to enter two teams in this league for the upcoming season. Teams will compete against associations throughout the Thompson/Okanagan region and will be required to travel for some league games.



Players must try out at this level, by doing evaluations. Once evaluations are completed, two equal teams will be made up with KMHA and the coaches forming the teams together.



The Orange teams will receive an additional weekly practice with the focus being to develop all players in the program.



Depending on numbers and ability, the plan is for each team to have 15 skaters and 1 full time goaltender. Goaltenders will be based on numbers and ability.



There is a \$50 fee to tryout for a U9 Orange team. If your player makes the team, there will be an additional fee of \$200 to cover the extra ice during the season.



# SEASON PLAN

The season will be split into three phases emphasizing on skill development, being part of a team and having fun.

## PHASE 1

**Sept 15 – Oct 15**

**Evaluations & Team Selections**

**Practice Only**

**No Games**

## PHASE 2

**Oct 15 – Dec 15**

**Games Begin on Mini Rink  
or Half Ice Games on Full Sheet**

## PHASE 3

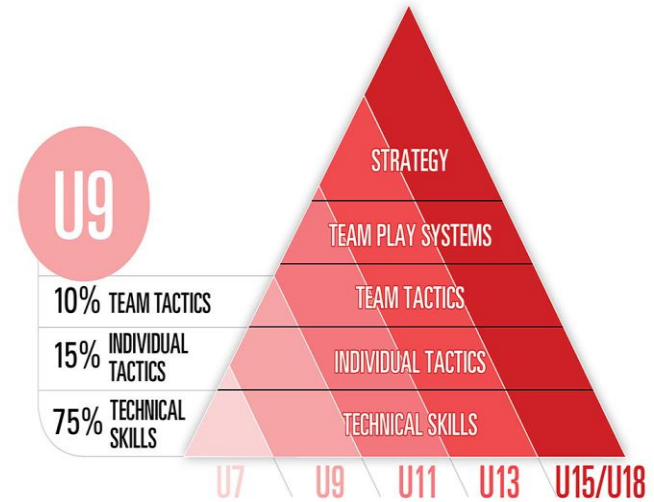
**Dec 15 – Mar 15**

**Full Ice Games Introduced  
Games played on Full Sheet  
and/or Mini Rink**



# PRACTICE STRUCTURE

- Head coaches are responsible for running the practices
- Practice Plans will be made by the head coaches with support from KMHA staff
- Two teams will share the ice on full sized sheets or one team on the Mini Rink
- 1 hour ice times
- 1 weekday practice per week
- Additional weekday practice per week for U9 Orange division teams



PRACTICE PLAN		
	TIME	DETAILS
Warm-up	10 Minutes	Group warm-up together or in individual teams.
Skills Stations + Drills	40 Minutes	Each team runs 3 stations on their own side of the ice.
Group Activity	10 Minutes	Game or activity to end practice



# U9 GAMEPLAY

## Why Half Ice or Modified Ice

### Every player is more involved

Compared to full-ice hockey, cross- and half-ice play result in:

- 3× more puck touches
- 2.5× more pass attempts and completions
- 4× more shots on goal
- 2× more ice time
- 4× more puck battles and recoveries

### Faster learning and improved hockey sense

- Forces quicker decisions
- Puck protection in traffic
- Change direction more often
- Find open ice and support teammates

These situations happen constantly in games as children get older.

### Builds confidence for all skill levels

- Gives players more time with the puck
- Encourages creativity and problem-solving in tight areas
- Compresses time and space, forming good habits for the future

### Enhances skating development

- Emphasizes acceleration, agility and balance
- Requires quick stops, turns and edge control
- Results in shorter but more intense bursts

Rather than focusing on straight-line speed, all players will be challenged to develop critical small-area skating skills, which are foundational to game play at higher levels.

### It's a Fun Environment

- More action
- More goals
- More engagement
- Less waiting on the bench

When kids are having fun, they are more likely to stay in the game longer and develop a lifelong love of hockey.



# U9 GAMEPLAY

## PHASE 2

This format will be used during Phase 2 for half ice games, or games played on the Mini Rink from Oct 15 – Dec 15

### CHANGE OF POSSESSION

- Continuous play - Goaltender freezes the puck – Puck shot out of play – Goal is scored.
- The official will blow their whistle and signal the attacking players to back off three metres. Play resumes as soon as the possession team has control of the puck.
- The goal is to keep the game moving with limited stoppages.

### SHIFTS/LINE CHANGES

- Buzzer or whistle will sound to signal the players to change.
- On buzzer/whistle, players leave the puck immediately and skate to the bench. Resting players immediately skate to the live puck.

**Tag Up Rule:** If there are fewer than 4 players on the bench, the active player designated to stay out for the following shift must tag up at the bench prior to racing to the play the loose puck.

### Penalties

- Minor penalties are issued with the official raising their arm to indicate a penalty and stopping play to assign the penalty.
- The penalized player will return to their bench and miss the rest of the shift.
- If the infraction happens at the end of their shift, the player will miss their next shift.
- Teams will not play shorthanded. The penalized player is replaced with a new player.
- Non offending team starts with the puck by their goal.



# U9 GAMEPLAY

## PHASE 3

This format will be used during Phase 3 for full ice games, or games played on the Mini Rink from Dec 15 – March 15

### Gameplay

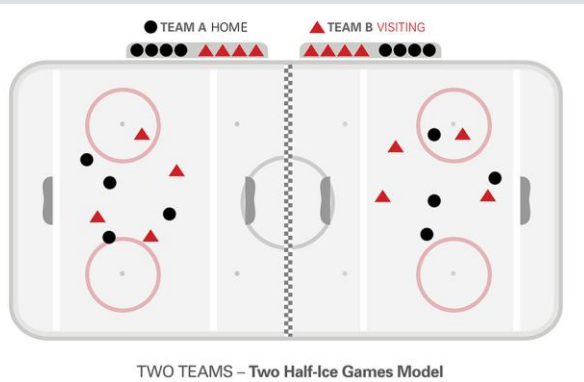
- 5 v 5 introducing off-side and icing.
- Three periods run time. 5-minute warmup followed by 15/15/20 run time
- Two referees per game.
- Stoppage in play results in a faceoff.
- Shift lengths – 60 seconds or less. Purpose is to push players to play hard when on the ice. Shorter downtime on the bench.
- Players play all positions – forward, defence, goaltender.
- Full time goaltenders are allowed.
- If multiple “full time” goaltenders, they will share the net equally. If they are not a goaltender for a game, they can play as a skater.
- Regulation sized nets for full ice games.

### Penalties

- Minor penalties are issued. Stopping play when the offending team gains possession.
- The penalized player will go to the penalty box to serve a 2 min run time penalty.
- Teams will play shorthanded.
- Player is out after 2 minutes or a goal is scored by the opposing team



# HALF-ICE GAMEPLAY



## Game Set-up and Flow

- Each game will be played 4v4.
- Two periods, run time. The score clock can be used to keep time for both games simultaneously. No score is kept.
- One referee per game.
- Each team will be divided into two units of players, each with a goaltender. Divide players into two groups based on skill level so the stronger players are playing against each other.
- Each team has two goaltenders, one for each half of the ice.
- 90 second shift lengths to start, working to 60 seconds by mid season.
- Teams will share the player's benches, with each team using the gate closest to their net.
- Two face-offs during the game. One to start the game, and one to start the second half.
- No off-sides, no icing.
- Coaches can be on the ice with skates to help direct their team to begin the season.