



Tryout Handbook

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The tryout process is one of the most challenging and stressful times during the hockey season—especially for parents! Research has shown that kids, in many cases, handle the pressure of tryouts better than parents, making this time of the season a particularly nerve-wracking and potentially upsetting experience for all! This handbook attempts to explain the Huskies Hockey Club tryout process and provide answers to questions, especially for those parents who have not been through this process before.



- To provide a fair and impartial assessment of a player’s total hockey skills during skating, small area games, and scrimmage sessions
- To place players on the most appropriate team based on their skill level, measured against their peer group, during on-ice evaluations while also factoring in feedback from previous coaches and certain hockey “intangibles” (e.g., work ethic, coachability, attitude, etc.)
- To provide uniformity, consistency, and transparency in the tryout process such that player and parent expectations are consistent from year to year as players move through the various levels of the Huskies Hockey Club’s age groups (8U, 10U, 12U, 14U, 16U, or 18U)
- To form teams that are competitive at each level and provide the best opportunity for all players to develop their skills further and HAVE FUN playing hockey



The following are frequently asked questions that hopefully will help build a greater understanding of how the player tryout process works:

How many tryout sessions will there be?

There will be 2-3 tryout sessions for each level.

Why do we have tryouts?

Huskies Hockey Club conducts tryout sessions to provide player assessments each season and to place players on travel teams. There are enough players to have multiple teams at each level, and they are divided per ability to maximize the potential for each player and each team to improve and have a successful season. The Huskies aim to provide the best opportunity for all players to develop their hockey skills further.

Is my child guaranteed to make the same team, or higher, than the one they participated in during the prior season?

Placement on a specific team is not guaranteed. All children wishing to participate on a travel team are required to participate in the tryout process. As stated above, the goal of the tryout process is to place the participants on the appropriate level team to maximize their opportunity to develop their hockey skills further. Depending on the skill level of those participating in tryouts, a child that played on an AA level team the prior year may be placed on the A1 team at the same level for the upcoming season (or A1 to A2, etc). These decisions are made in the best interest of the child's development and what is best for each team.

Who will do the evaluations?

There are several key groups involved in the evaluations:

- On-ice coaches to take players through the session.
- Off-ice evaluators will be responsible for evaluating every player on the ice during the allotted time. Evaluators from outside the Huskies Hockey Club program may also supplement the evaluators.
- On-ice evaluators may also be utilized and provide feedback on coachability and attitude during tryout sessions.
- Off-ice administrators who will be responsible for collating evaluations and presenting them to the Tryout Committee for review and placement of players

What is being evaluated?

Refer to the section on Player Selection Criteria for more information on specific skills, tactics, and behaviors being evaluated. This section gives an outline of what is evaluated in each session.

Will the player be evaluated in a skill and game environment?

To give every player a fair opportunity to exhibit their skills, they will be evaluated within skill stations, small area games, and full ice scrimmage environments. At the younger age levels, a greater emphasis will be placed on evaluating skills. As the players get older, the small area game and scrimmage sessions will have a more significant overall impact on the player's placement. Your son/daughter will have the chance to try out in the position they are most comfortable in but may be asked to play a different position to give the evaluators an understanding of their overall game knowledge and on-ice awareness.

Will prior season evaluation information be used?

If available, the tryout process will include prior season assessments and feedback from the previous year's coaches. Players will be selected based on individual skills as well as several intangible traits. These traits are as follows:

- Attendance & commitment - As specified by their previous seasons' coaches, a player's commitment may be used as a factor in final player placement.
- Attitude & Behavior
- Determination, drive, intensity, and work ethic
- Discipline
- Positive team player
- Coachability
- Hockey is a team sport, and individuals with stronger but selfish skills can often be counterproductive to achieving team goals and upset team chemistry. Hockey is a long season, and the right team chemistry (on and off the ice) is crucial to a successful program. The Huskies will keep this in mind when making team selections.

How many players will be on a team and how many teams will there be?

Team composition and size will directly relate to tryout registration and final commitment numbers. The Huskies Hockey Club Board of Directors reserves the right to increase or decrease the number of travel teams based on the number of players possessing the necessary skills to play travel hockey and the number of actual commitments received following the completion of tryouts.



The primary skill coaches look at is skating. If you can excel at starting, stopping, turning, and crossovers well, the rest of the game becomes easier. Good skaters consistently win races to pucks, win battles in the corner, and put themselves in better positions. There isn't a single hockey skill more important than skating. Puck control, passing and receiving, shooting, and offensive and defensive tactics are the fundamentals of the game that all coaches will evaluate when selecting players for their team.

SKILL	CRITERIA	HOW WE EVALUATE...
Skating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceleration • Speed • Mobility • Agility • Balance • Stride • Crossovers • Pivots/transitions • Acceleration out of turns • Quick feet • Controlled skating • Change of pace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the player perform the basic forward and backward stride? • Are the player's knees well bent with the back slightly forward and the head up, or is the player hunched over, bending at the waist with little knee bend? • Good skaters will use long strides with a complete recovery of the stride leg before striding with the other leg. Their strides will look very smooth and appear not to require much effort to move around the ice. • Does the player look smooth when they skate or appear off balance? • Can the player turn in both directions with little trouble, or do they struggle to turn in one or both directions? • Can the player stop in both directions? Younger players will often have trouble stopping in one direction. • Can the player keep up with the play, or do they struggle to stay with the other players on the ice?
Passing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a pass • Receiving a pass • Passing choices • Backhand passes • Unselfish with the puck • Presents a good target • Receives and retains with control • Touch passing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the player have the basic skills to execute a forehand pass? • When the player passes the puck, do they slap at it, or is the motion smooth, with the player following through to the intended target? • Can the player pass the puck to its intended target with minimal effort? • Can the player make an accurate pass to a moving target? • Can the player receive a pass on their backhand, or do they tend to shift their body to receive the pass on the forehand? • Can the player pass the puck off the backhand with some speed and accuracy? • Does the player call for the puck vs. banging their stick on the ice or saying nothing? • Does the player passing the puck make eye contact with the intended receiver, or do they pass the puck without looking? • Can the player execute a saucer pass over sticks and other obstacles? • Can the player pass the puck off the boards to another player?
Puck Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head up • Smooth and quiet • Good hands • Protection in small spaces and in traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the player foundationally ready to handle/carry the puck using a hockey stance with hands away from the body? • Does the player appear to be comfortable handling the puck while skating, or do they seem to fight the puck and have trouble skating with some speed while handling it? • Can the player keep their head up while carrying the puck? • Can they execute dekes and fakes with the puck? • Can they stop quickly or change direction while handling the puck? • Can the player continue to handle the puck while in traffic and under pressure? • Does the player get pushed or checked off the puck easily?

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SKILL	CRITERIA	HOW WE EVALUATE...
Shooting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power • Accuracy • Quick release • Can shoot in motion • Goal scorer • Rebound control • Variety of shots: wrist shot, snapshot, backhand, slapshot (not applicable for squirts or mites). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the player exhibit balance within the shooting motion? • Can the player execute the technique of a wrist shot and backhand (weight shift)? • Does the player follow through to the target on all shots? • Can the player raise the puck? • Is the puck shot with some velocity? • Does the puck sit flat in the air or wobble? • Can the player execute a one-time shot? • Is the player accurate when shooting?
Positional Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to see the play develop offensively and defensively, and move to support • Judgment • Anticipation • Understanding of the position • Discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the player seem to understand where they are to play on the ice? • Do they support the puck in defensive and offensive situations? • Does the player show patience, or do they tend to panic when pressured? • Do they protect the mid-lane and force opposing players inside out? • Can the player angle another player off the puck? • Does the player force the play, or do they wait too long?
Checking Concepts <i>(if applicable)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angling • Good body position with balance and control • Defensive side position • Aggressive checker • Strength • Receiving checks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the player execute basic stick and body checks? • Does the player understand angling and how to angle an opposing player effectively? • Does the player check properly with their hands down, or do they get their arms up to give a check? • Can the player receive a check properly, not turning their back and staying close to the boards? • Can the player check and pin an opposing player on the boards? • Does the player shy away from other players?
Goaltending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance • Mobility • Quickness • Low shots • Rebound control • Proper angles • Post play • Stick control • Reaction • Butterfly • Posture • Flexibility • Concentration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the goaltender demonstrate proper positioning, movement, and save selection? • Are they using correct techniques for different situations, such as break-aways, odd-man rushes, and screens? • Do their fundamentals allow them to cover the net effectively? • Does the goaltender have a strong understanding of the game, allowing them to anticipate plays and make timely decisions? • Do they exhibit leadership qualities that inspire confidence in the team?
Mental Toughness & Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus • Resilience • Emotional Regulation • Optimism • Adaptability • Reliability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the player handle pressure situations? • Do they remain composed and focused, even in high-stress moments? • Are they able to rebound quickly from goals against or mistakes? • Is the player's performance consistent over time, or do they exhibit significant fluctuations in their play from game to game? • Are they able to maintain a high level of performance throughout the season?



Coaches consider several factors when making team decisions other than talent and skill. The talent aspect is obvious — talented players are what coaches look for on the ice when it comes to performance, but coaches use other aspects to make their final decisions. Here is a list of a few:

Coachability

Can the player take direction, or does the player think they “know it all?” Accepting coaching (both positive and negative) is arguably the most essential quality of a player - even above talent.

Work Ethic/ Attitude

Is the player inherently lazy, or do they give you total effort every time they're on the ice? Lazy players make coaching more difficult and decrease the efficiency of the coach - they will need to focus more on making an honest effort rather than teaching. Just Because you were successful in making the team last year doesn't guarantee your spot for the upcoming season. Nothing is secured, and you need to prove yourself all over again. Simply going through the motions won't be enough. Show why you'll be a good teammate.

Accountability

Does the player have a good track record of showing up to all the practices, games, and team functions — or is there always a reason they can't make it? When players miss practices, it forces a coach to revisit old topics instead of being able to build off them.

Club History

Has the player been with the Huskies for an extended period, or are they known for jumping from club to club every season? Coaches concerned about player development want players who will likely be with them for multiple years.

Team Fit

Does the player's style of play fit in with what the team needs? Teams don't need 20 players with excellent hands but will never go into a corner or finish a check. Good teams have players that fit different roles within the team. This is often where players with more talent can be passed by in favor of a player with the skills needed to round out a team.

Other Coaches Recommendations

Hockey is a small world. Coaches often look to previous coaches for advice. If a player was nothing but a pain for another coach, there's a good chance the next coach will also know about it.

Parents

Believe it or not, this can factor into decisions. Are the player's parents known for being hard to deal with? Did they openly bash the club, team, or coaching staff when things were not going well? Coaches are humans — like it or not, most coaches will take a player with a bit less talent but a family who is supportive over a player with more talent but has problematic parents.



All coaches look to their team leaders for the same five essential qualities that can differentiate between good and bad seasons. While some people believe there are “born leaders,” leadership can be developed through practice and conscious effort. Parents spend countless hours and thousands of dollars developing the physical skill of their children to excel in their chosen sport. Coaches know that physical skill is only one essential quality in selecting key players. The intangible, sometimes immeasurable qualities make a player invaluable to an organization. Parents, players, and coaches who work to develop these five essential qualities will see their efforts pay off:

1 Responsibility

Leaders assume the responsibility of representing the coaching staff. During a game, players are often out of earshot of the coaching staff. The team’s leaders never lose control of communication on the ice, especially between face-offs. They take charge and remain optimistic, encouraging, aggressive, and decisive. Leaders make good decisions on and off the ice. They dissuade teammates from engaging in unsportsmanlike activities. They associate with other “good kids” and resist everyday temptations that others cannot.

2 Morale

Leaders have insatiable morale. This doesn’t mean just leading the team chant or keeping a smile on your face when the team is down by 10. Morale can be heard in the voice of a player who is determined not to give up. Morale is a tall, confident posture with actions to match. Morale is a “must-win,” cheerful, vigorous, and passionate attitude that a player brings to every practice and every game.

3 Work Ethic

Criticism of a coach to be “playing favorites” is not uncommon. The truth of the matter is hard work, and the right attitude will gain players the opportunity to prove themselves that players of the same skill and lesser determination will never see. Team leaders should possess a fantastic work ethic. The actions and behaviors of the team’s leaders are contagious. A team leader who is complacent with his skill level is a malignancy. Leaders are the first to practice and last to leave. They seek assistance from the coaching staff regularly. They ask what they can do to improve their ability. They are visible during the off-season. Leaders give it their all. They push themselves and others to do more.

4 Skill

Skill is an undeniable trait of a leader. However, skill is broader than the general notion of physical talent. Leaders possess both physical talent and the mental edge for the game. An excellent player must also be an intelligent player. They must become a student of the game. Their intimate knowledge will allow them to turn opponents’ mistakes into opportunities to score. The smart player can pull off the unexpected without it being a gamble. The physically skilled player works on their craft constantly. The leader reads, attends camps, watches videos, practices, and trains specific to the sport. Their passion and focus, even in the off-season, elevates their game. Some players are born with skill, but a leader works tirelessly to improve their skill and the skill of their teammates.

5 Respect

Respect must be earned. It’s often said that it takes time to “earn” the respect of others. This is not necessarily true. A player should look to earn the respect of this coach and fellow teammates on the first day of practice. Showing up early, demonstrating an exemplary work ethic, winning morale, exhibiting tremendous skill, and a sense of responsibility are things that will win the respect of your teammates and coaches immediately—maintaining this respect daily, week after week, season after season separates the leaders from the other players. Respect is tenuous. A player can lose the respect of his teammates and coaches with one careless comment or one thoughtless activity. Earning and maintaining respect is a difficult job requiring self-control, sincerity, confidence, and determination.

If you are looking to play hockey at the junior level, or beyond, many recruiters look at more than what is visible on the ice. Unsurprisingly, they often want to know more about a player’s personality and leadership qualities than their skill. Physical skill speaks for itself. Leadership qualities are not as easily summarized but are of equal importance to the success of a team and organization.



As we have said, tryouts are very stressful for players and parents. Since your child will be busy working on the ice during this time, we ask that you please commit to following these simple rules during tryouts:

I will... always stay positive with my child

It's crucial to maintain a positive attitude when talking to your child about hockey tryouts, focusing on their effort and growth rather than just the outcome, to keep their motivation and self-esteem intact throughout the process and beyond.

I will not... stand by the glass during tryouts

Parents and bystanders should not stand along the glass. Please sit in the bleachers during the tryouts. Violating this rule may result in a parent being asked to leave the rink for the rest of the session.

I will not... sideline coach

Sideline coaching by the parents during the tryouts or outward yelling will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the tryout session. Your player must always remain focused and attentive to the instructors.

I will not... overanalyze the reps my player gets

Please do not count shots that each goalie gets or time how long your child is involved in a specific drill or scrimmage. The coaches are evaluating all players to give them opportunities to display their abilities. It is impossible to make reps completely even among all players, but please know that the coaches are doing everything they need to do to evaluate each player.

I will not... discuss other players

Avoid talking about other players or comparing your child to other children. This can only cause negative or hurt feelings.

I will... stay focused on the big picture

Trust that our goal is to give every child the best opportunity for them to succeed, and help them have a great year!

We hope the information in this handbook clarifies the tryout process at the Huskies Hockey Club. If you have any further tryout or team placement questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Hockey Director or a Huskies Hockey Club Board of Directors member.

We look forward to a fun and successful hockey season!

