

Children's Ringette Guidelines

2020-2021



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Canada



Please note that Children's Ringette may look different in the 2020-21 season based on your Provincial Ringette Organization's Return to Ringette plan and your provincial and local health guidelines.

What is Children's Ringette?

Children's Ringette refers to Ringette Canada's grassroots program to introduce participants under the age of 10 to the sport of ringette.

Children's Ringette is when participants are introduced to competition. It is in this context that participants develop fundamental movement which provide a foundation for all ringette skills. Priority fundamental movement skills include locomotion on ice (forwards and backwards skating skills – starting, stopping, falling, pivoting, turning, stumble recovery, jumping, etc...) as well as object control and manipulation (ring control, passing, shooting, stopping).

To optimally support athlete development, we must create a system of appropriate training and competition designed specifically for children, instead of forcing them to adapt to the adult system before they have reached that stage in their development.

As more research emerges on the subject of youth sports and long-term athlete development, many sport organizations across Canada and internationally are adopting the concepts that form the foundation of the Children's Ringette program.

Highlights of the Children's Ringette program:

- Ringette experience that is tailored to the age, size and skill level of participants
- Participants are grouped by developmental stages rather than chronological ages and are able to move up when they are ready
- Emphasis on fun and fundamental skill development
- Increased opportunities for participation and engagement
- Adapted game play including small-area games and small nets

Beginning in the 2020-21 season, Ringette Canada is recommending the current U8, U9 and U10 age categories be replaced with one program with three progressive divisions – FUN1, FUN2 and FUN3.

Ringette Canada is also recommending the following corresponding game formats:

FUN1 – Cross or Half-Ice Games

FUN2 – Cross or Half-Ice Games

FUN3 – Full Ice

Glossary of Terms

Formal Competition –

Players from multiple associations located in different communities play a consecutive series of games outside regular practice play.

Group –

Refers to athletes in a program placed together for the purposes of participating in a program. Athletes should be grouped based on their ability to have meaningful, developmentally appropriate practice and competition experiences by being closely matched for the specific activity taking place during a session.

Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) –

Refers to Canadian Sport for Life's athlete-centred framework for full sport system alignment in Canada and the optimal development of athletes of all ages, interests and abilities.

Meaningful Competition –

Refers to the concept of providing experiences that support learning for competitors, are structured to reinforce the development of LTAD stage-specific skills and abilities, and that lead to results that are relatively close and unpredictable.

Program –

Refers to a planned and progressive sequencing of activities that are adapted to an athletes' age and sport experience.

Session –

Refers to individual on-ice or off-ice practices or games.

Stage –

Refers to the development level of an athlete in terms of Ringette Canada's LTAD framework.

Team / Squad –

In Children's Ringette, teams are formed from the group of athletes who play together in a given session, tournament or jamboree.



Program Structure

Athlete Stages and Ages

- 1) For the 2020-21 season, Ringette Canada and its provincial partners are focusing on implementation at the U9 level and below, with implementation at the U10 level and below to follow for the 2021-22 season.
- 2) This program corresponds with the Fundamentals (approximately 6-8 years old) and early Learn to Train stage (approximately 8-11 years old).

Divisions

- 1) Ringette Canada is recommending that existing U8, U9 and U10 age categories be gradually replaced with one program with progressive divisions that place participants in groups based on skill level rather than age.
 - a. *Appendix A* provides a more detailed framework of what these groupings may look like.
 - b. The purpose of the groupings is to create opportunities for meaningful competition between athletes of similar ability.
- 2) Groups of different stages can and should share ice time when possible. In part as this facilitates movement between groups as athletes' skills develop. Coaches are encouraged to move athletes between different groups during practice sessions to practice with players of similar skill levels during that session.
- 3) Full-ice games should be introduced in the final level of the Children's Ringette program.

Placing and Moving Athletes Between Divisions

- 1) Assessments or evaluations at the start of the program should be used to determine the appropriate division placement of participants. These assessments may also assist coaches in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of their athletes in order to better plan practices. Re-assessing players throughout the program can also help highlight the athletes' progress throughout the season.
 - a. Assessment tools have been developed to assist coaches in placing athletes within the three divisions and can be found on Ringette Canada's Children's Ringette page.
 - b. When assessing skills, it is important to not only determine whether or not an athlete can do the skill, but also if they are able to execute the skill technically correct. For example, if you were to evaluate a player's ability to execute a parallel stop, you must first observe whether the player can come to a full stop or not. Beyond that however, you must also evaluate whether the athlete turns their body and feet with the stop, whether they are using both feet equally, whether they can maintain their balance during the stop, etc.



- 2) Beyond the physical or technical assessments, it is important to consider the physical, cognitive and social readiness of the athlete. The following factors can play a role in ensuring players are in the right division – physical size, maturity, family and friendships.

Program, Group and Team Sizes

1) Program Size.

- a. There should be no limit to the number of participants in a program provided that there are an appropriate number of coaches to manage the number of participants.

2) Group Size.

- a. The number of groups an association can support will and should differ based on the size of the association. Each group should consist of 9 to 12 athletes.

3) Team Size.

- a. Teams are formed for participation in tournaments, jamborees or intra-program games from the pool of participants in a specific group, and should not exceed 12 players.
- b. Game format should be taken into consideration when determining team sizes as the goal should be to maximize participation and ice time of each player.
- c. It is preferable to form multiple balanced smaller teams rather than one large team.
- d. Examples:
 - i) At the end of a practice session, Group 1 will be playing 3v3 cross-ice games. Group 1 has 12 players; therefore forms 3 equal teams of 4 players.
 - ii) Association A is attending a half-ice Jamboree that is using the 4v4 (+ a goalie) format. 20 total players from Association A's Group 3 and Group 4 have decided to participate. Association A would then enter 2 equal teams of 10 players.

Program Length

- 1) Children's Ringette programs are recommended to be limited to a maximum of 13 consecutive weeks (or 3 months), with no more than 2 programs (or 6 months) occurring per year.
 - a. This provides participants with the opportunity to advance one or more program levels every 3 months (if offered within the association).
 - b. This provides participants with sufficient time for exposure to other sports to support long-term athlete development.
 - c. Provides participants with another entry point to engage in a ringette program within the year.
- 2) Associations currently running a longer program are encouraged to split their season into 2 seasons.
 - a. Should this not be possible for the 2020-21 season, Ringette Canada recommends limiting Children's Ringette programs to no longer than six months, with the intention to move towards two three-month long programs in future seasons.



Sessions

- 1) On-ice sessions should be limited to 1-2 per week.
 - a. Minimum 45 minutes and maximum 60 minutes in length.
 - b. There should be no off-ice training sessions at this stage.
- 2) Please see *Appendix B* and *Appendix C* for sample session outlines.
- 3) Please see Ringette Canada's [Jamboree Guide](#) for detailed diagrams on ice-set ups.

Competition

Formal Competition

- 1) Ringette Canada recommends that formal competition be optional for participants in Children's Ringette.
 - a. Competition should be in the form of tournaments or jamborees where participants in a program who wish to compete form a team or multiple teams.
 - b. These tournaments and jamborees are opportunities to develop and measure skills while experiencing the social elements of sport.
- 2) Formal league play and rankings (standings) are not advised in Children's Ringette.
 - a. Associations can and are encouraged to organize small-area games or scrimmages against other associations with teams of similar ability or stage. Emphasis should be on participation and skill development, and scores should not be kept.
- 3) Small-area intra-group or program games are to be regularly incorporated into weekly ice sessions.

Tournaments and Jamborees

- 1) Organizers need to ensure teams from different associations are playing teams of like ability.
 - a. Example - Fundamentals 1 team from Association A should not play against Fundamentals 3 team from Association B.
- 2) Organizers must ensure team sizes are appropriate for the chosen game format.
 - a. Example – If the Jamboree is using the Half-Ice 3v3 (+ goalie) format, each team should have 7-12 players to ensure sufficient ice and rest time. If Association A brings 20 athletes, they should form 2 separate teams of 10.
 - b. Team sizes should be determined by the chosen game format, but organizers must remain flexible to the notion that in reality, team sizes may sometimes dictate the format (i.e. move from 3v3 to 4v4 to accommodate larger team sizes).



- 3) Organizers should ensure that coaches and parents are aware ahead of time that teams will likely have to share dressing rooms.
 - a. Consider asking the facility to set up chairs or benches outside the dressing room for additional space for parents to tie skates and assist athletes with other equipment.

Game Rules and Guidelines

Please see *Appendix A*.

Equipment

- 1) **Reduced-size nets** should be used as a part of scaling the game down for participants. Reduced-size nets increase the chances of success for players who are trying goaltending, in addition to reducing the chances of a blowout game that leads to frequent stoppages in play.
 - a. 3'x4' (52") nets should be used as the first option and are available at most sporting goods retailers.
 - b. A second option is to use pop-up mini soccer nets available at most sporting good retailers.
 - c. Pylons placed 3' apart may also be used.
- 2) **Dividers.**
 - a. The use of rink or ice dividers is encouraged if available.
 - i. Ice dividers permit coaches to clearly define playing areas, and therefore help ensure player safety.
 - ii. Dividers help facilitate the flow of the game by keeping the ring in play and thus reducing the number of stoppages.
 - b. Alternatively, pylons may also be used to divide the ice.
- 3) Local ringette associations should attempt to create partnerships with local hockey associations to cost-share the purchase of small-area game equipment used in both sports.

Ice Markings

- 1) Creases should be approximately 1.8 meters in radius and should be approximately 1.5 meters away from the center line (half-ice games) or boards (cross-ice games).
- 2) In game formats that only use one passing line; the line should be drawn approximately half way between the two creases.
 - a. Alternatively, use the ringette line as the passing line.
- 3) In game formats that use two passing lines, use the existing blue line as one passing line with the second line drawn straight across the free pass circles.



Use of Shot Clock

- 1) Shot clocks are not to be used in Children's Ringette

Scores and Ranking

- 1) Scores and standings are not to be kept in Children's Ringette.

General Game Play

NOTE:

When multiple rule options are given, coaches and organizers should use their discretion to pick the best rule option for their athletes and the specific situation.

- 1) Starting the game.
 - a. Option 1: Coach tosses the ring into play.
 - b. Option 2: One team will start with the ring on their half of the ice and the defending team starts on their half of the ice.
 - c. Option 3: One team starts with a free pass with a 1-meter clearance to make a stationary pass to a teammate. Coaches can choose to draw or designate a specific spot for this to occur.
- 2) Re-start after a goal.
 - a. Option 1: Team that scored backs off and team that was scored against gets possession of the ring.
 - b. Option 2: Team that was scored against gets a goalie ring with a verbal five count.
 - c. Option 3: Team that scored retreats to their half of the ice surface and team that was scored against is awarded a free pass with 1-meter clearance to make a stationary pass to a teammate.
- 3) Re-start after ring leaves playing area.
 - a. Option 1: Coaches throw the ring back into play.
 - b. Option 2: Non-offending team is awarded a goalie ring.
 - c. Option 3: Non-offending team is awarded a free pass with 1-meter clearance to make a stationary pass to a teammate.

COACH TIP:

Coaches should consider intentionally giving specific players the ring when using some of the above restart options to ensure every player has the chance to start with the ring.



Rule Infractions

- 1) Rule infractions will likely happen frequently as athletes learn the game and move through the stages.
- 2) Coaches and officials should use their discretion in choosing the appropriate response from the options below based on the situation and considering player intent (i.e. player attempted to pass over the passing line but released the ring too late, tried to stay out of the crease, etc.).
 - a. Option 1: Continue play but give player verbal reminder.
 - b. Option 2: Stop play if player safety is at risk (i.e. kicking the ring, covering the ring, etc.) and give verbal explanation.
 - c. Option 3: Stop play and award non-offending team a free pass with 1-meter clearance to make a stationary pass to a teammate.
- 3) Key messaging:
 - a. Keep verbal cues brief and language consistent to assist with athlete learning.
 - b. Incorporate positive feedback into corrections.

Penalties

- 1) Many penalties committed in Children's Ringette are unintentional and stem from lack of understanding. Educating athletes on the rationale behind penalties or infractions via verbal cues and corrections is important
- 2) Formal penalties should not be awarded. Coaches and officials should use their discretion in choosing the appropriate response from the options below based on the situation. Ensuring player safety is paramount.
 - a. Option 1: Continue play but give player verbal reminder.
 - b. Option 2: Stop for unintentional dangerous play and provide verbal explanation before continuing play using any of the re-start options.
 - c. Option 3: Stop play and have player sit out a shift (or more). This option should only be applied if the player has had repeated warnings or if the behavior is putting player safety at risk.
- 3) Key messaging:
 - a. Keep verbal cues brief and language consistent to assist with athlete learning.
 - b. Incorporate positive feedback into corrections.
 - c. Emphasize safety rationale when explaining penalties.

Coaching and Officiating

Coaching Requirements

- 1) The program lead must be Community Sport Initiation (CSI) trained.
- 2) All on-ice (or bench) coaches must have completed the following modules:
 - a. Make Ethical Decisions (MED) – Contact Provincial/Territorial Coaching Representatives.
 - b. Coach Initiation in Sport – Coaching Association of Canada (<https://thelocker.coach.ca>)
 - c. Respect in Sport for Activity Leaders – Respect Group (<https://www.respectgroupinc.com/>)
- 3) All must have at least one qualified female on the ice or bench based on one of the above two requirements (1 or 2).
- 4) All program personnel must adhere to their local association's volunteer screening policy.

Officials

- 1) Officials are not required at this stage. Coaches can serve as acting referees to facilitate games.
 - a. These games may serve as development opportunities for junior officials.
- 2) The main role of officials or acting referees' in Children's Ringette to help ensure game flow and provide structure to the game, which requires strong flexibility and discretionary skills. They will also serve as educators to young athletes learning the game.



Appendices

Appendix A – Program Progressions & Game Formats

Stage	Age	Description	Game Format	Ice Markings	Positions	Shifts
FUN1	U6, U7, U8	Children in this stage may have never played ringette before, have limited skating ability and wish to learn the sport of ringette.	Cross-Ice 3v3 or 4v4 (no goalies)	Crease – None or draw fun shape Passing lines - None	None	2-3 min. of equal shifts
FUN2	U7, U8, U9	Children in this stage may have never played ringette before, have defined skating ability, and wish to learn the sport of ringette.	Half-Ice 3v3 (+ goalie) or 4v4 (+ goalie)	Crease – Yes Passing lines - One	Rotated goalie only using stick	2-3 min. of equal shifts
FUN3	U9, U10	Children in this stage may have never played ringette before, can skate forward and backward and wish to learn the sport of ringette.	Full-Ice 5v5 (+goalie)	Crease – Yes Passing lines - Two	Rotated goalie only using stick Introduction of Forward & Defense	2-3 min. of equal shifts



Appendix B – Sample On-Ice Practice Session

Timing	Activity	Notes
10 minutes (off-ice, prior to start of session)	Introduction	Safety rules and instructions for warm-up/first activity. Coaches can choose to use this time to divide athletes into their groups.
5-10 minutes	Warm-up	A coach leads athletes through warm-up while another sets up stations and drills. This is also the time to move dividers and make ice markings if needed. Follow the leader is a great way to keep all participants moving and away from hazard areas while setup is taking place.
25-30 minutes	Skill Development	Athletes are working with their groups on appropriate skating and ringette skills using activities or drills. It is recommended that coaches rotate participants through stations, changing stations every 7-12 minutes. Coaches are encouraged to include cross-ice games as a station during most sessions. A key measure of success for all skill development sessions is that athletes are continuously moving, have many repetitions (chances to try) and are engaged in the task.
5-10 minutes	Games/Cool-down	Small-area games (if not incorporated into skill development) or fun activity and wrap-up.

Appendix C – Sample On-Ice Game Session

Timing	Activity	Notes
10 minutes (off-ice, prior to start of session)	Introduction	Safety rules and instructions. Coaches can choose to use this time to divide athletes into their teams, assign benches and playing areas before getting on the ice.
5-10 minutes	Warm-up	A coach leads athletes through warm-up while another divides up the ice and makes any necessary ice markings.
25-35 minutes	Small-area games	Logistics will depend largely on the number of athletes on the ice and the game format. Focus should be on limiting periods of inactivity by keeping team sizes small.
5-10 minutes	Cool-down	Wrap up.