

# Hockey Practice vs Hockey Game

by Jeremy on January 20, 2010

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLAYER DEVELOPMENT IN HOCKEY

### HOCKEY PRACTICE V S . HOCKEY GAMES

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Many hockey players and parents have questioned whether hockey games or practices help a player develop more? Take a look at the stats below and you will know which is better.

One of the biggest issues surrounding the development of hockey players is the number of practices they have compared to the number of games they play. An ideal, realistic ratio is 2 practices for every 1 game played for ages 7 – 13. While some associations have no problem in meeting the recommended ratio, others have great difficulty in finding enough ice time meet this practice to game ratio. Are games really necessary, or all they are cracked up to be? Not when you look at the stats below, especially if you are trying to develop skills.

*Howtohockey note:* Keep in mind that children can practice hockey almost anywhere. You do not have to wait until a planned practice to practice your hockey skills. Encourage children to practice at home and with friends. Look for outdoor rinks in the winter and places to practice shooting and stick handling in the summer.

### A PRACTICE BY THE NUMBERS

*The following facts and figures relate to a 60-minute practice session:*

- 1 efficient practice will give a player more skill development than 11 games collectively.
- Each player should have a puck on his or her stick for 8 – 12 minutes.
- Each player should have a minimum of 30 shots on goal.
- Players will miss the net over 30% of the time in a minor hockey practice.
- Coaches should try to run 4 – 5 different drills / games / activities each practice. More is not better; execution of what you do is development.
- No more than 5 minutes should be spent in front of a teaching board each practice.
- If you have 10 players on the ice, strive to keep 4 – 5 players moving at all times.
- If you have 15 players on the ice, strive to keep 9 – 10 players moving at all times.
- If you have 20 players on the ice, strive to keep 14 – 15 players moving at all times.

### A HOCKEY GAME BY THE NUMBERS :

*The following statistics were recorded during a 60-minute Peewee level hockey game:*

- Players will have the puck on their stick for an average of 8 seconds per game.

- Players will take an average of 1 – 2 shots per game.
- 99% of the feedback coaches give players is when they have the puck. Ironically players only have the puck on their stick for 0.2% of the game.
- 1 efficient practice will give a player more skill development than 11 games collectively.

If you look at these stats, how can we expect kids to develop when they are playing more games than practicing? Studies show that the better kids are at something, the more they will enjoy it, and the longer they will play. Many kids quit hockey because they get to the level where they can't compete due to lack of skill – therefore it is no longer fun. At the ages of 5 – 6 or 5 – 7, the practice to game ratio should be even higher (6: 1) and realistically there is no need for formal games.

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