

Rink Time = Liquid Gold



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team stars for
the night.



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Your son or daughter is on a good team, the season has started and practice time to upgrade or just brush up on skills is definitely in order.

Should ice time be equal for players of all levels? Or should elite skaters get more time? These questions frequently appear due to the ice crunch felt all over Canada. As an example, Calgary has 48 sheets of ice available for public use, most owned by the city or community groups. A report commissioned by the city concluded that Calgary will need at least 10 more sheets by 2010. Most parents and players agree - whether you're in a house league or AAA level, everyone deserves equal practice time.

So the question remains - with high fees and game prices, how do you make sure you get the most out of the precious time on the ice with your team? The point is for each player to have fun, learn and use rink time to drill skills and techniques. Prep before ice time can make rink time liquid gold.

Pre-ice checklist

Getting the skill development that is part of hockey practice begins with what's best for the athlete. Before your son or daughter ever hits the ice, it pays to be sure they are in top form to get the most out of a practice session. Here are five quick tips to help you ensure your player is ready for ice time:

1. **Comfort**
Layer with a wicking first layer, comfortable socks, gloves and whatever your player needs to make sure that when the heat is on, they're warm and comfortable enough for action on the ice.
2. **Rest**
Make sure your player has had enough sleep. Unplug from TV, Wii, Xbox and the computer a couple of hours before bedtime. Make sure your son or daughter has cycled down from the day, has their gear bag prepped and is ready to go before or after school.
3. **Fuel**
Either with a nutritious breakfast if practice is early or dinner for a session after school, make sure your player has enough protein, water and their favourite fuel--from oatmeal to gel shots--to keep their energy high on the ice.
4. **School**
Minor League, while all for fun, still takes a commitment of energy and time for all players. Create an after-school home atmosphere that is free of distractions so your player can keep on top of homework assignments.
5. **Home**
Your child may have assigned tasks around the home. Make sure you help your player balance these with schoolwork and hockey. A balance in all areas allows your player to keep their focus 100% on the play when they're on the ice.

Once these have been covered, your player is ready to concentrate on the game, on being a better teammate and on the drills and techniques that will make him or her a better hockey player.

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