

# The Home Ice Advantage

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## Your backyard, your rink

According to GreenLiving Magazine, the average North American kid spends less than 15 minutes per day outside and up to five hours a day playing video games, or watching television. One great way to help your family combat the couch potato winter blahs and get out there is to create your own backyard ice rink.

### Memories are made of this

Mike from Burlington, ON remembers winters in the 70's fondly, when his dad and five of their town house neighbours flooded their yards to create one excellent, long backyard rink. Scott from Regina, SK says his family was the one house on the block where all the neighbourhood kids could be found when they flooded one of their family fields, "We got reciprocal pool privileges in the summer, and it was great for my parents because they always knew where my brothers and I were."

Outdoor rinks are an important part of Canadian history and culture, with hockey, curling and ringette first being played on outdoor ponds and backyard rinks. We all know the story of how Wayne Gretzky's dad Walter built him a rink every season.

- Backyard ice rinks are the way to go with expensive ice time and costs to play hockey prohibitive for many Canadian families. Former Go for Green's Executive Director, Stephen Grundy agrees, "Although the romantic notion of outdoor rinks is preserved in our folklore and in nostalgic media campaigns, the fact is that access to outdoor skating facilities is on the decline, reducing opportunities for unstructured play, healthy outdoor physical activity, and community-based sport among our children," he said. "Today a whole generation is missing out on one of the best parts of growing up in Canada."

### Just flood it or get fancy

Whether you are planning to build an outdoor rink in your backyard, in your community, on a frozen pond or a waterway, here's a basic how-to, to get your blades on local ice this winter. The emphasis is on fun, not perfection.

Choose an area of your yard that is fairly level and decide on the size of rink you want to build-- even townhouses have enough space for a rink.

#### Ingredients:

- Lumber pieces--2x6, 2x8 or 2x10's, depending on how flat your backyard is, and a couple of extra lengths to join side boards
- Box(es) of screws, #8 Robertson, 2" inch long-- work well and preserve the Canadian history
- Snow shovels and brushes, enough so everyone can help pack and smooth the ice
- **A hose to flood your rink evenly**
- **Carpet remnants for walking on with skates (optional)**
- If building a rink with a tarp add a tarp about. 1 metre longer and wider than the actual size of your rink

### Ice, ice baby

To make ice, you need a three-day stretch of cold when night temperatures are no more than -10°C to -15°C and day temperatures don't rise above freezing.

Once there is at least 4-6 cm of snow on the ground, pack it down using boots, a shovel, or better yet, load your kids on a toboggan and pull them back and forth over the snow.

If you're using a tarp-and-boards--lay the tarp over the entire rink and drape it over the top of the boards, down the back, and tuck it under the board itself.

Hose the area down with water and let it freeze overnight. Once frozen, brush the surface of the ice to make it smoother, and pack holes with snow using your boots or a shovel.

Shovel off snow regularly and re-flood your rink with warm water occasionally to repair skate marks and cracks. It's best to re-flood your rink later in the day to take advantage of colder temperatures.

While ScotiaHockey.com does not manage or support the content of other sites, here are some further links to build your own backyard rink this season. We always welcome your insight and tips about this and any subjects relating to minor league hockey --[info@scotiahockey.com](mailto:info@scotiahockey.com). [WC: 657]

<http://www.backyardrinks.com/inablink.html>

The Rink-in-a-Blink kit from Backyard Rinks Ltd. includes a 10-by-20-foot polyethylene bag, but the instructions couldn't be simpler. Spread the bag on a flat surface and fill it with water. When it freezes, cut the top layer of plastic off and you're ready to skate.

[www.backyardrink.com/](http://www.backyardrink.com/)

The package includes a plastic liner and specially designed J-brackets to hold up the boards.

[www.rinkrake.com/](http://www.rinkrake.com/)

[www.nicerink.com/](http://www.nicerink.com/)