



“Intro to Hockey”



Program Philosophy:

The goal of the “Intro to Hockey” program is to give kids the opportunity to try out the wonderfully fun (but challenging) sport of Hockey with a minimal time and cost commitment. Although skating skills come slowly at first, once young kids gain some confidence on the ice, their skills advance quickly. And when kids are equipped with full hockey pads, they tend to learn to skate at a much quicker pace because it doesn’t hurt to fall down. Once they get going and are moving around comfortably on skates, that’s when the REAL fun begins for these kids. It doesn’t take long before the coaches start focusing on the next key challenge: Teaching them to stop!

Program Highlights:

Who can Enroll: Boys and Girls ages 4 – 8 with little or no skating ability

Practices: **Once per week** – One hour in length

Season Length: Late October/Early November through Late February

Practice Days & Time: **Saturdays** - start time for 1 hr practice between 11:00am & 1:30pm (exact time tbd) with the exception of holiday weekends or other conflicts (# of sessions will be determined depending on demand)

Cost: **\$95 per skater**

Number of Skaters: Maximum number of skaters per session is 50

Loaner Equipment Options: **Starter equipment is available to new skaters** on a first-come, first-serve basis as supplies are limited. The Usage fee for the Loaner Equipment is \$25 per set and a \$100 deposit will be required for each set (details below). **Update: Currently all sets have been reserved.**

Registration: To register your skater and reserve loaner equipment (if available) please follow the registration and payment instructions online at www.flhockey.org. Registrations will be accepted until Nov 15th.

Coaches: All on-ice coaching is provided by parent volunteers of the Forest Lake Hockey Association who have completed the USA Hockey level 1 certification. Any parent with skating ability is encouraged to assist on the ice. If you have an interest in helping the coaches on the ice, please email the Mites Director, Jeff Dzurik at flmitehockey@gmail.com .

USA Hockey Registration: All skaters in this program must register with USA Hockey. There is no fee to register for skaters age 6 and under. For all others, the fee is \$40 and includes a subscription to USA Hockey magazine as well as Minnesota Hockey magazine. Instructions for this USA Hockey process will be provided at the time of registration.

What Equipment is Needed

- ✓ **Hockey Skates** – available for purchase OR lease at Forest Lake Cycle & Skate (located inside the arena) and other sporting goods stores. Other sources include garage sales or the annual “Hockey Swap Day”.
- ✓ **Body Pads** – full body pads includes shoulder pads, breezers (pants), elbow pads, gloves, and shin guards – *these items are all included in the FLHA loaner sets (see below)*
- ✓ **Helmets** – youth size hockey helmets must have facemask/shield and can be found new or used through a variety of sources – *helmets are included with the FLHA loaner sets (see below)*
- ✓ **Hockey Stick** – beginner hockey sticks (wood with straight blade) cost between \$10 - \$15 and are available at all hockey retailers. Do NOT spend money on a fancy hockey stick at this level!
- ✓ **Jersey & Hockey Socks** – these items are **provided** free-of-charge as part of the “Intro to Hockey” program
- ✓ **Mouth guard** – these can be obtained at any sporting goods store

Other optional/suggested items:

- **Protective Gear** – protective cup or pants are encouraged for boys
- **Thermal underwear** – most kids prefer to have either thermal underwear or light clothing (ie pajamas) under their equipment
- **Hockey Tape** – this will be needed to tape up the hockey stick
- **Skating socks** – generally kids are more comfortable in their skates wearing a thin, breathable sock
- **Neck Guard** – an optional item that parents may want to consider

FLHA Loaner Equipment “Starter Sets”

The Forest Lake Hockey Association was awarded 2 grants this spring which are being used to purchase 40 sets of “loaner” hockey equipment so that families can inexpensively allow their child to try out the sport of hockey. These sets are currently only available to new skaters that register for “Intro to Hockey” and include shoulder pads, breezers, elbow pads, gloves, shin pads, and helmet (and

an equipment bag). A \$100 deposit is required at the time of pick-up and when the equipment is turned in at the end of the season (without unreasonable wear and tear), the check will be returned. A fee of \$25 is charged for use of the equipment which will be put towards equipment cleaning & storage and also towards the purchase of additional sets in the future. We hope to make this option available to as many families as possible. Because we have a limited number of sets, it is highly advisable that families register their skaters and reserve an equipment set. We cannot guarantee that we will have sets available for those that request it unless they have completed the registration process at www.flhockey.org and opted for use of the loaner equipment. **Update:** *Currently our initial supply of 40 starter sets has been exhausted BUT we have negotiated a group discount that is just for new "Intro" skaters towards the purchase of new equipment through Forest Lake Cycle & Skate (located at the arena). Please call or stop in for details.*

Questions?

Please direct any of your questions to the liaison for "Intro to Hockey":

Curt Smith – ph# 612-308-4367 – email curt34sm@yahoo.com

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is it a problem if my child has never been on the ice before? – Although it's helpful if your child has had some exposure to skating before, it's not a necessity. This program is designed for kids who have little or no skating ability.

How old does my child need to be to participate in this program? – Generally it is recommended that your child celebrate their 4th birthday prior to the start of the hockey season. For those children younger than that, they probably should not be registered for hockey unless they have had substantial skating experience already.

Why is it so much easier for kids to learn to skate when they're wearing hockey equipment? – Skating for the 1st time is pretty exciting for kids but we sometimes forget that ice is a very hard surface and staying upright is a challenge to these kids so, needless to say, falling down can be very painful at times. In contrast to that, when the kids are wearing pads, it doesn't hurt to fall down so they are willing to push themselves a lot more and take more risks. Not to mention that they feel like they're "Superheroes" when they're in full gear! Put those two confidence building factors together and you have a recipe for quick learning.

Do we need to purchase a full set of hockey equipment? – Many families are hesitant to purchase hockey equipment for their new skater since they are not sure if he/she will like the sport. For that reason, "Intro to Hockey" offers "loaner" equipment (supply is limited) so that families have the opportunity to try the sport without a significant financial investment. The Hockey Association also coordinates an annual "equipment swap" in September which provides inexpensive equipment options to skaters at all levels.

Is this the appropriate program if my child can already skate? – For those kids that already have some skating ability, this may not be the proper hockey level for them. The Mites/U8 level might be a more appropriate choice for your child's skill level since it is a more challenging program and more likely to keep your child's interest. You are encouraged to contact the Mites Director, Jeff Dzurik, if you are unsure about the proper hockey level placement of your child. (Email: flmitehockey@gmail.com)

What will be the times and location for the practices? – In order to minimize time commitments for families, practices will be held on the same day, at the same time, and at the same arena every week. Although exact times have not been determined, practices will be held on Saturdays at the FLAAA Sports Center around the 11am to 2pm timeframe. In the future, we hope to offer a weekday evening option as well.

How long is the season and when does it start? – The 1st practice/orientation will be held in late October with the 1st "on-ice" practice one week later. The season will run until late February with breaks for holidays and scheduled tournaments at the arena.

How will practices be structured? – All practices will be focused on keeping the kids moving and making it FUN! Groups will be formed on the ice so that skaters with similar abilities will be together. Do not expect to see very many hockey "drills". Most of the time will be spent simply helping them maintain their balance and playing games that encourage them to move and get comfortable on the ice. And we will also focus on keeping them engaged since attention spans can be very short at this age.

We already have hockey equipment but I don't know how to put it on him? Most parents who are new to hockey have this same challenge. Because of this,

the 1st practice for “Intro to Hockey” will include a review of a number of various items with parents and skaters including checking for proper fit of the hockey equipment, where it goes, and how to put it on. Ice time will be minimal on the 1st day as we try to get kids and parents prepared properly.

What things can I do to prepare my child for “Intro to Hockey” – there are a few things parents can do at home to prepare for skating. #1-have them walk around the house with their skates on (and skate guards). This will help them get more comfortable on their skates and strengthen their ankles. #2-it is helpful if they can practice getting up off the floor with their skates on. They will be doing plenty of this on the ice initially so it is helpful to practice it ahead of time.

Do I need to stay at the arena during the practice? Yes, it is required that at least one parent/guardian be available during the practice just in case their child might need something. You wouldn’t want to miss this anyway!

Will a pre-season Parent’s meeting be held? – Rather than have a separate parents meeting and a potentially hectic 1st day of practice, our first day will be a special Orientation day for parents AND kids and set the stage for a fun season. We will hand out the jerseys and socks. Loaner equipment will be distributed to those that reserved it. You will be able to view the arena and see where everything is located (ie locker rooms, bathroom, concession stand, etc). And we will even show you how to tape a hockey stick. The goal will be to answer any and all questions so that families know what to expect for the season which makes everything much more enjoyable and far less stressful. Ice will be available however, should your child want to step on for a few minutes.

When will the kids be able to play games? – Once the kids have developed some confidence on the ice and with basic stick-handling, small area games will be introduced. But the main event happens at the end of the year when the kids

will participate in the annual “Jamboree” which mimics a real hockey game! The kids are introduced over the PA system, get to sit on the bench and even change shifts when the horn goes off and everyone really gets a thrill out of it!

How do you handle kids that lag behind? – As parents we have realized that every child progresses at every skill at a different pace for a variety of reasons. Sports such as hockey are no different. Thus, we strive in this program to make sure that kids are grouped with others of similar ability so that they are not embarrassed or intimidated and lose interest. Rather they become competitive and motivated and..... have more FUN!

What things can I do to speed up the skating “learning curve”? – During the season, it is highly advisable that you supplement the “Intro to Hockey” practices with Open Skate opportunities at the arena. The more time the kids are on the ice, the better they will become. The FLAAA Sports Center offers “Open Skate” days all throughout the season as do other nearby arenas. For the Open Skate schedule, please visit <http://www.flaaa.org/page/show/313251-sports-center>

Does our family need to live within the Forest Lake School District? – If your child attends a public or charter school that is located within the geographic boundaries of the Forest Lake School District, they are eligible to enroll in this program. You do not need to reside within the district boundaries.

Can I help out on the ice and assist the coaches? – For anyone interested in assisting on the ice, your help would be greatly appreciated. At this level, a coaches skating ability is far less important than a simple ability to have fun with the kids. Please contact the Mites Director, Jeff Dzurik, to find out more about volunteer coaching and how you can help. (Email: flmitehockey@gmail.com)