

MITE PROGRAM

Hello Parents and Welcome Mites!

Thank you for considering the Tartan Area Youth Hockey Association (TAYHA) Mite program! Welcome to those families who are new to our program and welcome back to our returning families!

The goal of the Mite program is to provide organized and fun hockey instruction which your kids will be eager to be a part of. In an effort to do so, the Mite program is divided into four separate skill levels: Mini-Mite, Mite 1, Mite 2 and Mite 3. No one level is more important than the other and the use of these skill levels serve to properly match children with like skating abilities.

For new players, the skill levels allow children to feel more comfortable and encouraged to participate by eliminating the anxiety they may feel when skating with children who currently have more experience. For returning players, these levels provide an environment where they can receive more customized practice plans, develop self-confidence in their game play, be proud of their accomplishments and feel like a contributing member of their team.

Besides joining a hockey organization with 40 years of experience, another great reason to join TAYHA hockey is the cost! TAYHA makes every effort to keep its Mite fees low so young players can try hockey without a large financial burden to their parents!

TAYHA's Mite fees are not only significantly lower than most local hockey associations but they are less than the actual expenses incurred by the program. At approximately \$20 per month Mini-Mite and Mite 1 hockey at TAYHA is no more expensive than other team sports (baseball, basketball, etc.) and significantly cheaper than individual sports such as gymnastics, dance, swimming and martial arts which run as much as \$100 per month.

Prior to online registration in August, you can get a better understanding of our program and answer most of the questions you may have by taking the time to read the attached information. For answers to the most commonly asked questions read the **Mite FAQ's**. For more in-depth information about the program please read **Mite Hockey Age, Mite Skill Levels, and Mite Evaluations**.

If you should have any questions not answered after reading the above information please feel free to send the Mite director an email. Thanks again and we look forward to seeing you at the rink!

MITE PROGRAM - FAQ's

Is TAYHA the correct hockey association for my child?

The general rule determined by Minnesota Hockey is that Mite age children may choose to register in the hockey association which is affiliated with either the location of the child's school or the location of their primary residence. As a result, a child may register to play hockey in TAYHA if either the child's school (whether public or private) or residence are located within the Tartan High School attendance area. For the written rule see either www.minnesotahockey.org or www.tayha.org. For an attendance area map see www.isd622.org.

How old does my child have to be to play Mite hockey?

To determine a player's Hockey Age and eligibility for the Mite program USA and MN Hockey utilize a fiscal year which begins July 1st and ends June 30th. To be eligible to participate in the Mini/Mite Program a player must at least 4, and not older than 8 years old, as of June 30th. Children who turn 4 years old after June 30th MUST wait until the following season to register for hockey. Children who turn 9 prior to July 1st MUST register at the Squirt level.

Does my child need to know how to skate? No. The TAYHA Mite program is a developmental program which will teach your child the fundamentals of ice skating and hockey. Mite player's skills will be assessed at the beginning of the season and kids of like abilities will be placed so they can learn to skate together. For more information on Mite player evaluations and placement please see the Mite Evaluations section below.

At what level do I register my child? During registration parents should select a level which seems to best match your child's skating ability. Prior to the season ALL players registered for Mite 2 and 3 will be evaluated and placed at the appropriate skill level. Those player's who register for Mini-mite and Mite 1 will not be part of these evaluations. For more information on levels please see the Mite Skill Levels section below.

What is the cost? TAYHA strives to provide parents an affordable option for their children to try the great sport of ice hockey. Mite hockey costs are kept as low as possible so young players can try hockey to see if they like it. Registration fees in the TAYHA Mite program are not only significantly lower than most other local associations but they are less than the actual expenses incurred by the program. See the Registration tab at www.tayha.org for current Mite fees.

How and what do I need to register? TAYHA hockey registration is held online during the month of August each year. Exact dates and times will generally be posted on the TAYHA website by July 1st. See the Registration link at www.tayha.org for more information.

What equipment is needed? To be allowed on the ice Mini/Mite players are to wear the following equipment:

REQUIRED:

Certified hockey helmet/mask - black recommended
Mouth guard
Hockey Skates
Hockey Stick
Shoulder pads
Breezers - black recommended
Shin pads
Elbow pads
Hockey Gloves - black recommended

RECOMMENDED:

Hockey shorts (holds cup/socks)
Cup/Pelvic Protector
Neck Guard
Hockey/duffle bag

Do I need a jersey and hockey socks? All players will receive a team jersey and matching hockey socks. However, a player should bring alternative jersey/socks to wear while jerseys are being lettered at the beginning of the season.

Do boys and girls play on the same team? Except at the Mini Mite level, we strongly encourage all girls to enroll in the girls U8 hockey program.

Can my child play on a team with his/her friends? The program tries but does NOT guarantee that a child will play with his/her “current” friends. It is most important to first place your child with others of similar skating ability. Although it may seem intimidating, the kids (and the parents) will benefit by developing “new” friendships in the same way they did when first entering school.

How long does the season run?

Our hockey season typically starts in early November and runs through the middle of March.

When and how often do they practice? Mini-mite and Mites practice every Saturday and Sunday at varied times in the morning and afternoon throughout the season. When ice is available Mite 3 players will also practice every Wednesday night while Mite 2 players will practice every other. Your child’s coach may also schedule optional “dry land” (off ice) and outdoor rink times during the season.

Where do they practice? Practices are held indoors at the Tartan Ice Arena directly behind Tartan High School. Team locker rooms are provided where parents can get their kids dressed.

How many players are on each team? There are generally 12-15 players on each team. Two teams will share the ice for each practice.

What is the refund policy if my child doesn’t want to play after giving it a try? TAYHA fee’s may be refunded for NEW players should they decide to no longer play within two weeks of their first practice. TAYHA may refund returning players who decide to withdraw only where extenuating circumstances merit a refund.

I still have questions, who can I contact?

If you should have questions that were not answered by the information posted on the TAYHA website please contact the current Mite Director.

MITE PROGRAM - WHAT’S YOUR HOCKEY AGE?

To be eligible to participate in the Mite program a player must have a “Hockey Age” between 4 and 8 years old. To determine a player’s Hockey Age and eligibility USA and MN Hockey utilize a fiscal year which begins July 1st and ends June 30th. As a result, to be considered eligible as a 4 year old and participate at the Mini-Mite level players MUST be 4 years old on or before June 30th of the current registration year. Likewise, Mite players must not be older than 8 years old as of June 30th of the current registration year. See the Blue Book for the Mite birthdate range. For each season, the Hockey Age classifications are:

HOCKEY AGE

- Hockey Age 4 - Five years of Mite eligibility
- Hockey Age 5 - Four years of Mite eligibility
- Hockey Age 6 - Three years of Mite eligibility
- Hockey Age 7 - Two years of Mite eligibility
- Hockey Age 8 - Last year of Mite eligibility

MITE PROGRAM - SKILL LEVELS

Similar to other skill driven sports such as martial arts, gymnastics and swimming, the Mite hockey program is most appropriately organized by skill level rather than by age. Unlike other sports, the unusual playing field for the game of hockey - ice - as well as the speed of the game can be very intimidating for young children. For these reasons the Mite program consists of four basic skill levels: Mini-Mite, Mite 1, Mite 2 and Mite 3.

The primary purpose of providing multiple skill levels is to make youth hockey fun for all children by: 1) providing kids an environment where they will not be self-conscious of their current skating capability, 2) not be intimidated and discouraged by participating with peers who are currently more experienced, and 3) provide kids with customized practice plans and noncompetitive games which will serve best to develop their self-confidence, skating skills and make them proud of their accomplishments.

Listed below are general definitions of the four Mite skill levels. When you register please impartially select the skill level which most closely matches your child's current skating proficiency (not aggressiveness/game play). Regardless of the level chosen by parents during registration, at the beginning of the season all players will be evaluated to determine their proper placement. (*See Mite Program Evaluations below for more information*).

The skill levels are flexible and each year your child's placement will depend on multiple factors such as the player evaluations, the number of players enrolled, the range of talent for that given season and how players can be best grouped to create an evenly balanced program.

Mini-Mites: This program is for players who currently have little or no skating ability (forward steps v. strides). The program is primarily designed for Hockey Age's 4 & 5 new to skating but will accommodate Hockey Age 6 where necessary. Per Minnesota Hockey Rules and Regulations even if a player is new to skating Hockey Age's 7 & 8 may not participate at this level.

Mite 1: This program is primarily designed for Hockey Age 5 players who are more proficient and most Hockey Age 6 players. This level will also accommodate Hockey Age 7 & 8 who are new to skating and where necessary. These kids are able to skate with forward strides on both feet (not steps), working on backwards skating, can carry a puck the length of the ice, and can hockey stop on at least one foot (preferably both feet).

Mite 2: This program is primarily designed for the more proficient Hockey Age 6 players, the majority of Hockey Age 7 players, and less proficient Hockey Age 8 players. In general, these kids are proficient at striding forward, skate backwards with confidence, will attempt forward crossovers, working on backwards crossovers, efficiently carry a puck while skating/turning, and can hockey stop on both feet.

Mite 3: This program is exclusively designed for the most skilled players at Hockey Age's 7 & 8. Dependent on the range of skill for that given year, this level will consist of the 24 - 30 players with the highest overall evaluation scores. (See Evaluations below). Actual game play, aggressiveness and a player's propensity to score are not relevant to placement. Players at this level must be capable of active listening, attentively following on ice direction and demonstrate a willingness to attempt and improve on advanced drills. Mite 3 is not a mandatory level for Mite players in their last year of eligibility.

MITE PROGRAM - EVALUATIONS

OVERVIEW

At the start of each hockey season a skill assessment will be conducted to evaluate each child's current hockey/skating ability. Depending on the Mite level you select during the registration process will determine which of two assessment methods will be utilized to make sure your child is placed at the proper skill level: either a preseason Skill Evaluation or an Informal Coaches Assessment.

Both Mini-Mite and Mite 1 registered skaters will be informally assessed by their coaches during their initial practices to verify the kids are participating at the proper level. Children registered for Mite 2 and Mite 3 will participate in a Skill Evaluation to determine their placement (which may include repeating to Mite 1 where appropriate). The following table illustrates what assessment method will be utilized in accordance with your child's registration:

<u>Registered Level</u>	<u>Assessment Method</u>
Mini-Mites	Informal Coaches Assessment
Mite 1	Informal Coaches Assessment
Mite 2	Skill Evaluation
Mite 3	Skill Evaluation

The kids in the Mite program are very young - between 4 and 8 years old. PLEASE don't get wrapped up in the levels. All the Mini-Mite and Mite levels are NON-competitive. The levels are utilized solely for proper skill development and your child's enjoyment of being out on the ice. It is very important for all parents to remember:

***** Mite Evaluations are NOT a competition *****

***** Mite Evaluations are NOT tryouts *****

Similar to sports such as martial arts, gymnastics, and swimming we are merely assessing their current ability so your children can participate, learn and have fun with others of like experience. Just as you wouldn't throw a beginning swimmer in the deep end, we will not incorrectly place a child in a program that will be intimidating and discouraging to their enjoyment of the game.

No one level should be seen as better than another. Regardless of their current skating ability, the Mite program provides a place for all kids to enjoy hockey. The goal is to place our children in both a fun and positive environment which will serve best to develop their confidence, skating skills and make them proud of their accomplishments! Not only will they be placed in the best possible environment in which to learn the great game of hockey, but your children will also gain by developing new friendships in the same way they did when first beginning school.

Improving on their fundamental skills and providing a basis for the players to recognize their accomplishments is essential to their enjoyment of playing the game of hockey and maintaining a lifelong interest. At this young age, placing our children in a noncompetitive environment - with others of like ability - will provide each child the best opportunity to learn basic skills without the pressures that can lead to becoming disenchanted and dropping out.

SKILL EVALUATION DAY

For players who registered for Mite 2/3 and participating in the preseason Skill Evaluation parents only need to encourage their kids to pay attention and have fun. There is no need to encourage your children to

skate at a higher level or explain to them that they are being evaluated. In their eyes, this day should be nothing more than another practice.

During the evaluation process a demonstration of each drill will be given prior to any player's attempt. The skills being evaluated are directly related to the various levels of the Mite program. Players should NOT be expected to be proficient at all the drills.

The evaluation process has been designed to assess each child's true on ice ability. This includes a child's mental disposition to follow directions and attempt the drill which was previously explained and demonstrated. We are not concerned with the number of attempts a player receives but that we accurately record the player's capacity to listen, understand and complete the drill. Many times one attempt will be sufficient. If a player falls or is confused and the evaluators feel they did not accurately assess the child's ability additional attempts and instructions will be given as warranted.

Prior to evaluation day all parents should be aware of the following:

- * Please review the time your child is scheduled to be evaluated.
- * Plan on arriving at the rink so that your child will be completely ready to go at least 10 minutes prior to their scheduled time.
- * When arriving at the arena for evaluations please go to the check-in table and receive a numbered pinnie. These need to be returned after evaluations.
- * All players must wear full equipment and the pinnie over their jersey.
- * The players will rotate through 5 skill stations. At each station there will be one Demonstrator and two Evaluators.
- * Please be respectful of all volunteers on the ice. It is their goal to be honest and fair during this process.
- * Do NOT coach your child from the bleachers or through the glass.
- * Each Evaluator's assessment is independent. They will not compare their scores with each other. If an Evaluator has a son/daughter participating in the evaluations they will not provide an assessment for that skill. In such case, the player's assessment for that skill will be based solely on the second Evaluator's score.

If your child is unable to attend due to illness or unavoidable circumstance he/she will be placed at a level based on a number of factors which include: the prior years evaluation score, prior coaches recommendation, and the player's age.