

New Parent Overview

Eligibility – Who is Initiation for?

Initiation is open to all skaters who have never been on skates or are just getting started in hockey. The age of most skaters in initiation is 4 – 8 years old, but children outside of this age range may also play in initiation. It should be noted that for competitive teams (competitive teams described later in this document) the West Madison Polar Caps serve Madison West High School and Madison Memorial High School Districts. All skaters who reside on a permanent basis in these school districts are eligible to play on competitive teams for the West Madison Polar Caps. Thus, if you live outside of these school districts, you are welcome to have your kids play in the Polar Caps initiation program, but they may have to move to another program when it comes time to play at a competitive level.

Philosophy & Background

The Initiation Program is designed to build self-confidence on the ice and emphasizes skating skills, basic hockey concepts, and most importantly, HAVING FUN! Our goal is to provide the participants with a fun atmosphere to learn the game of hockey. We have succeeded if the player comes back the following year and is excited to play. Some examples of skills we try to develop are skating forwards, backwards, stopping, turning, v starts, t-pushes, c-cuts, basic puck handling, passing, and shooting. Many of the games that the kids play are fun ways for kids to learn these skills. Towards the end of the each session, scrimmages are organized to introduce team play. The scrimmages are meant to expose the kids to a team game situation with no scoreboard and little pressure. Players in initiation are at very different skill levels it is very important for parents and coaches to be patient and maintain a very positive attitude toward improvements that are made. Initiation sessions vary in length, but are typically around 8 weeks in duration. Examples of timeframes would be session 1 – mid Oct through Dec, session 2 – Jan through mid March. By offering multiple sessions per season, you can determine your child's participation and progress. Each Session consists of (two) 45 minute practices per week. There are usually two time slots for initiation, one starting right after each other. The earlier session is mostly kids that are just starting in initiation with very little or no skating experience. The later session is geared more toward kids who have some experience in hockey, but are not yet ready for cross-ice (explained later).

Equipment



What to get / what size to get:

Internet references for equipment sizing:

The hockey shop - <http://www.thehockeyshop.com/sizinginfo.html>

Hockey monkey - <http://hockeymonkey.com/sizingcharts.html>

Mandatory equipment:

Skates (and skate guards) – Properly fitting skates have a maximum of about 1/2" (width of adult finger) of movement when the player's toe is touching the front of the skate. Skate size is usually 1 to 1.5 sizes lower than shoe size. Example size 9 youth shoe = ~size 8 skate. Once the skater is comfortable on the ice, skates may be sharpened. We recommend a 1/2" diameter sharpen for starting out. (1/2" = diameter of stone used to sharpen, smaller stone = sharper skate. Skates too sharp make it very slippery and hard to stop). If your player will be walking off the ice on any hard surface with skates on, you will need skate guards, or the skate blades will become dull, immediately.

DO NOT WALK ON CONCRETE, TILE, METAL, BLACKTOP, ETC. WITH SKATES ON!!!! THIS WILL DULL (POSSIBLY DAMAGE SEVERELY) THE SKATE BLADES AND THEY WILL NEED TO BE RESHARPENED!

Stick – Length of stick should be approximately the distance from the ground to the skater's chin, with skates on. If you are unsure if your child is a righty or lefty for hockey (often different than throwing and writing), purchase a straight stick and let him or her choose.

Helmet with faceguard – Head sizes of children vary greatly. Measure the hat size or circumference of your child's head and use that when determining the size helmet to purchase. Ensure the helmet is certified by the Hockey Equipment Certification Council (HECC).

Elbow pads – Ensure that the straps secure the pad firmly to the elbow. Elbow pad size is intended to be the length from the end of the shoulder pad to the cuff of the glove.

Shin pads – Sizes are measured from the center of the knee cap to the top of the boot. Average size four year old may be 8 or 9”.

Hockey gloves – Gloves sizes are measured from the tip of the finger to the elbow. Size for a four year old is about 8 or 9”.

Additional recommended equipment

Breezers / pants – Pants should reach from the top of the knee up to the lowest ribs. Pants should also not rotate or slip down when tightened. Suspenders may also be used to hold pants up.

Shoulder pads – Should be snug around the chest when tightened.

Mouth guard – Heat and fit to mouth

Cup – Not necessary at this age, but if you have one, wear it. Another good alternative is special shorts that hold the cup and have Velcro patches for holding the socks up.

Garter Belt and hockey socks – Either hockey socks or sweat pants over shin pads.

It is not necessary to get the most expensive hockey equipment, but it is very important to make sure the equipment fits properly. Equipment that does not fit correctly is prone to falling off, sliding around, and making it uncomfortable, or possibly even unsafe for the skater.

Where to get it:

West Madison Polar Caps provide rental equipment for \$50 / year. This equipment includes helmet with faceguard, elbow pads, shin pads, hockey gloves, breezers / pants, & shoulder pads.

The following retailers have starter kits of equipment (excludes skates) for youth players that start at ~\$130 for brand new equipment (several internet sites also have starter kits):

CrossOvers (located inside Madison Ice Arena) PolarCaps rental gear available here as well,
608-770-2334 crossoversproshop.com

Middleton Cycle and Fitness – 6649 University Ave Middleton, 608-836-3931

Before practice:

You may get your player dressed before you get to the rink, or players may dress at the rink. There is a white board at the rink that (sometimes) designates the correct locker room to use. Please use the designated locker room to keep the hallways clear.

After practice:

Make sure the pads are left out to dry after each use. You may also want to clean the pads occasionally by putting it in the washing machine (for those pads that can go in) or by using Lysol, Febreze or a swimming pool chlorine + water solution.

The Future:

As your child progresses, West Madison usually offers two or three competitive teams at each USA Hockey age classification:

In-House / Recreational Programs

Cross-Ice (6 and under)

Red White Blue U8 (generally 8 and under)

Rink Rat U10 (generally 10 and under)

Rink Rat U13 (generally 13 and under)

In-House / Recreational players usually have 1-2 practices / week and 1 game every weekend.

Cross-Ice games are played on a divided large sheet, with play going across instead of lengthwise. The Rink Rat games are usually played on the studio rink.

Competitive Teams

Squirts (9 and 10)

PeeWees (11 and 12)

Bantams (13 and 14)

Midgets (15, 16 and 17)

Placement on these teams is competitive and is designed to group together players with similar skill levels. These teams usually have 1-2 practices per week and weekend games on a full sheet of ice (most in the Dane County area).

West Madison Polar Cap's Policies

Code of Conduct

West Madison Hockey emphasizes respect, sportsmanship and safety. All Polar Caps coaches, players and parents must sign and observe our "Code of Conduct." A copy of our code of conduct for parents, skaters and coaches are in the registration/forms section of the club web site, and are included in the club's Policies and Procedures manual. Coaches undergo background checks.

Hockey Fees

West Madison Polar Caps registration and skater fees cover ice time, game jerseys, insurance, referees, publication costs, mailing expenses, and club equipment. Parents must also register each skater with USA hockey. Current costs for this are \$40 per skater (free for all players ages 6 and under).

Jerseys

The club supplies all players with Polar Cap jerseys. In-house players receive one jersey. All jerseys are property of the Polar Caps and must be returned clean and in good condition.

Locker Rooms

Skaters should always dress in the locker rooms at Madison Ice Arena (MIA). Please remind your skater of their important responsibility to pick up their trash and tape to help keep the locker rooms clean. Our Code of Conduct includes locker room behavior.

Volunteer Coaches

The Polar caps depend on our dedicated volunteers. If you are interested in helping out, please see the coaching corner section of the website, and contact your Age Level Director or coach. All coaches must be USA Hockey registered, trained and certified, as well as pass a background screening. The organization gladly covers these costs, or you can donate the fees (keep your receipts)

Additional Hockey Resources:

USA Hockey www.usahockey.com

1-800-566-3288

Hockey education / drills, coaching info /clinics, rules, referee info, Team USA info

OneGoal www.onegoal.com

Nonprofit org provides basic hockey information for those getting started

UWBadgers.com www.uwbadgers.com

1-800-GOBADGERS

Follow the men's & women's hockey teams (and other sports), get tickets, go to a game

Arenamaps.com www.arenamaps.com

Find links and directions to ice arenas in WI

WAHA Hockey www.waha-hockey.com

WAHA (Wisconsin Amateur Hockey Assn) is the governing body for WI youth hockey