

DARTMOUTH WHALERS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION 2026/2027 TRYOUT PROCESS



Fair • Consistent • Transparent

Approved for the 2026/2027 season



Purpose

The Dartmouth Whalers Minor Hockey Association (DWMHA) tryout process is designed to provide every player with a fair, consistent, and transparent evaluation. This document explains what players and families can expect from registration through team selection and identifies the responsibilities of those involved in administering the process.

1. Roles and Responsibilities

The tryout process is administered by DWMHA volunteers and staff working in defined, non-conflict roles.

Technical Director

- Oversees and organizes the tryout process based on registration numbers and available ice.
- Recruits independent evaluators and confirms that they are free from conflicts of interest.
- Ensures consistency across all sessions within a division.
- Reviews evaluation results for administrative accuracy before rosters are finalized.

Tryout Coordinator (note for 2026/2027 this will be the Technical Director)

- Coordinates tryout administration, communications, technology, and evaluation data.
- Ensures evaluation data is uploaded accurately and results are released in a timely manner.
- Monitors the tryouts@whalers.org inbox and directs inquiries to the appropriate person.

Division Coordinators

- Manage player check-in, jersey assignments, and session logistics.
- Confirm that jersey numbers are recorded accurately and that DWMHA policies are followed.
- Ensure volunteers assigned to the division are free from conflicts of interest.

Independent Evaluators

- Evaluate and rank players using the approved DWMHA evaluation criteria and scoring system.
- Participate throughout the evaluation process for the assigned division to support consistency.
- Provide input after sessions only when requested by the Tryout Coordinator or evaluation committee.

Director of Competitive Hockey

- Represents DWMHA during the tryout process and confirms compliance with Association policies.
- Ensures required coordinators and volunteers are in place and free from conflicts of interest.

Quality Control Coordinator

- Verifies that jersey numbers and evaluation data are assigned to the correct players.
- Confirms that evaluation data has been uploaded accurately.

Parents and Guardians

- Ensure players arrive on time and prepared for each scheduled session.
- Notify tryouts@whalers.org as soon as possible if a player will be absent.
- Respect the communication windows and inquiry process described in this document.



Conflict of Interest: A person is considered to be in conflict if they have a child participating in the tryout process for that division. A person in conflict must not participate in player evaluations or final roster decisions for that division.

2. Registration and Player Availability

2.1 Registering for Tryouts

All players wishing to participate in DWMHA competitive team tryouts must complete the online Tryout Registration Form before the registration deadline. Families will be asked to provide player, position, contact, availability, and other information required to administer the tryout process.

Submitting a tryout registration does not guarantee placement on a competitive team. All registered players will be evaluated through the DWMHA tryout process.

2.2 Player Availability

DWMHA recognizes and supports the benefits of participating in multiple sports and activities. Players are encouraged to pursue opportunities that contribute to their overall development.

During registration, families will be asked to provide an accurate indication of the player's anticipated availability for the upcoming season. This information assists DWMHA with team planning, scheduling, and setting expectations.

Players selected to competitive teams are expected to regularly attend practices, games, and team activities. Participation in other sports and approved activities is supported; however, frequent discretionary absences or an ongoing lack of commitment to team responsibilities may be considered during team planning and roster decisions.

3. Tryout Schedule and Player Groups

3.1 Schedule

A detailed tryout schedule will be published before evaluations begin. It will identify the date, time, location, and player group for each session. While DWMHA does not anticipate changes, registration numbers, available ice, or other operational circumstances may require adjustments.

Anticipated Start Date	Division	Group(s)	Outline
September 19, 2026	U11	AA, A, B, C	See division flow chart
September 12, 2026	U13	AAA	See division flow chart
September 19, 2026	U13	AA, A, B, C	
September 24, 2026	U15	AA, A, B, C	See division flow chart
September 26, 2026	U18	AA, A, B, C	Three intersquad games



Additional sessions may be added or adjusted based on registration numbers and available ice.

3.2 Player Groups

For the initial skills session and first intersquad game, players will normally be assigned to groups alphabetically by last name and playing position. This provides an impartial starting point for all participants.

As the process progresses, groupings may change based on evaluation requirements and the stage of selection. Changes will be communicated to families in advance whenever possible.

4. Attendance and Approved Absences

Players develop at different rates, and their skills and abilities may change significantly from one season to the next. Comparing players in a common setting is therefore important to achieving fair and appropriate placement. All players are expected to attend every scheduled tryout session whenever possible.

A player who cannot attend must notify tryouts@whalers.org as soon as possible and, whenever practicable, at least 24 hours before the session. The notice should identify the reason for the absence and the anticipated return date.

4.1 Illness or Injury

Missing One Session

A player who misses one session due to illness or injury will be evaluated using the sessions they attend. Their available evaluation results will be adjusted to account for the missed session.

Missing Multiple Sessions

A player who misses multiple sessions but participates in part of the process will be evaluated using the sessions they attend. The evaluation committee may also consider relevant background information, including previous evaluations, coaching feedback, and prior performance, to assist with placement.

Unable to Participate

When a player is unable to participate in any part of the tryout process due to illness or injury, the evaluation committee may determine placement using available background information, including previous evaluations, coaching reports, prior performance, and other relevant information.

Where a significant injury prevents participation for an extended period, DWMHA may hold a roster position for a player who has been placed based on available information. Any decision is subject to roster availability and Hockey Nova Scotia regulations.

Medical Clearance

A player returning from a significant injury that caused them to miss multiple sessions must provide written clearance from their treating physician or another qualified healthcare professional before returning to the ice.



4.2 Compassionate Absences

DWMHA recognizes that exceptional circumstances may prevent a player from attending a tryout session. Compassionate consideration may be given for:

- A death, serious illness, or significant emergency involving an immediate family member.
- Participation in a regional, provincial, national, or international championship arising from the player's established commitment to another recognized activity.
- Observance of a recognized religious holiday or religious obligation.
- Other exceptional circumstances approved by the Tryout Coordinator.

DWMHA will make every reasonable effort to fairly evaluate players who miss sessions for approved reasons. However, the absence of direct observation creates challenges when assessing and comparing players. Families should therefore make every reasonable effort to ensure attendance at all scheduled sessions.

5. Player Evaluations

DWMHA uses independent evaluators to support a fair, objective, and impartial process. Evaluators are selected for their hockey knowledge, experience, and ability to provide unbiased assessments. Independent evaluators do not participate in final roster selections.

5.1 Respecting Evaluator Independence

Parents, guardians, players, coaches, and other participants must not attempt to influence, intimidate, question, or otherwise interfere with evaluators before, during, or after tryouts. Questions or concerns must be directed through the appropriate DWMHA representative and not to the evaluators.

Attempts to interfere with or improperly influence the evaluation process may result in disciplinary action. Depending on the nature and severity of the conduct, consequences may include a verbal or written warning, removal from the tryout venue, suspension from DWMHA activities, or other measures deemed appropriate by the Association.

5.2 Evaluation Method

Each player will be evaluated during every session they attend. Evaluators assign a score from 1 to 10 in each evaluation category, with higher scores indicating stronger performance. The DWMHA 1–10 Evaluation Scale is included as Appendix A.

For all divisions, players are evaluated in the following areas:

- **Skating:** speed, agility, edge work, acceleration, balance, and overall skating ability.
- **Passing:** accuracy, timing, decision-making, receiving passes, and execution under pressure.
- **Shooting:** accuracy, power, release, and ability to generate scoring opportunities.
- **Puck Control:** puck handling, possession, confidence with the puck, and ability to protect it under pressure.
- **Intangibles:** work ethic, competitiveness, hockey sense, communication, backchecking, net-front habits, support of teammates, and other behaviours that contribute to team success.

Evaluation scores from each session are compiled and reviewed as part of the overall player assessment. No single drill or session determines a player's placement.



Each session is evaluated independently. Players are assessed on their performance during that session and in relation to the players participating in it, rather than being directly compared with their own performance in earlier sessions.

6. Team Selection

Player evaluation scores form the foundation of team selection while allowing the selection committee to consider roster balance and overall team construction.

6.1 Automatic Selections

The following players will automatically earn roster positions based solely on their final evaluation scores:

- Top six (6) ranked forwards.
- Top four (4) ranked defencemen.
- Top two (2) ranked goaltenders.

6.2 Remaining Roster Positions

The remaining five (5) roster positions will be selected from the next ten (10) highest-ranked skaters. These decisions will be made collaboratively by:

- The Technical Director.
- A non-conflict Board member.
- The Head Coach or coaching staff, if appointed and free from conflict.

This process allows the selection committee to consider team balance, player roles, chemistry, and overall roster construction while ensuring that selections remain within the highest-ranked group of evaluated players.

6.3 Teams Without an Assigned Coach

If a Head Coach has not been appointed when roster decisions are required, the Technical Director and a non-conflict Board member will make the remaining selections using evaluation scores and any relevant input provided by the independent evaluators.

6.4 Goaltender Selection

Goaltenders will be selected strictly according to their evaluation scores. No discretionary goaltender selections will be made.

7. Out-of-Association Participants

DWMHA may permit a limited number of eligible players from outside the Association to attend competitive tryouts when the appropriate level of competition is not available through their home association. DWMHA's primary responsibility remains providing opportunities for players within its own membership.



7.1 Eligibility

A maximum of three (3) out-of-association players may be selected to a DWMHA competitive team within any division. To participate, the player must meet all of the following requirements:

- The player's home association does not offer the competitive level for which the player is trying out.
- Hockey Nova Scotia has provided written authorization for the player to participate in the DWMHA competitive tryout process.
- The player has completed all DWMHA registration requirements and is otherwise eligible to participate.

7.2 Selection Requirements

Out-of-association participants will be evaluated using the same criteria and scoring system as DWMHA players. To be selected, an out-of-association participant must earn an automatic selection by finishing as one of the top three (3) forwards, top two (2) defencemen, or the top-ranked goaltender based on final evaluation scores.

Out-of-association participants are not eligible for discretionary selection. If more than three out-of-association participants qualify for automatic selection, the three highest-ranked players will be selected.

8. Multiple Teams at the Same Tier

When DWMHA creates more than one team at the same competitive tier, players will first be ranked by overall evaluation score. Teams will then be formed using a snake-draft format to distribute talent as evenly as possible while respecting the evaluation rankings.

Example: Four Teams

Round 1	Round 2
Team 1 – Player 1	Team 4 – Player 5
Team 2 – Player 2	Team 3 – Player 6
Team 3 – Player 3	Team 2 – Player 7
Team 4 – Player 4	Team 1 – Player 8

The alternating order continues until all players have been assigned to a team.

9. Correction of Administrative Errors

Before rosters are finalized, the Technical Director may review evaluation results to verify their accuracy and confirm that the approved selection process was applied correctly.

The Technical Director may correct administrative or clerical errors, including:

- Calculation or tabulation errors.
- Data-entry errors.
- Incorrect player-position classifications.
- Other procedural errors that may affect placement.



Corrections under this section are limited to administrative errors. They must not be used to override the established evaluation process or make subjective changes to player rankings or roster selections.

10. Communication of Results

Following the completion of evaluations and final roster selections, DWMHA will publish player placements and team rosters through its official communication channels.

- Every effort will be made to publish results at approximately the same time.
- The published team rosters will serve as the official notification of player placements.
- Families are responsible for monitoring DWMHA's official communication channels for results and related updates.
- Additional information about practices, meetings, registration requirements, or the next stage of evaluation will be provided where applicable.

11. Questions Regarding Team Selection

Team selection can be an emotional process for players and families. To allow time to process the results, a **48-hour communication window** will apply following the release of team selections.

During this period, parents, guardians, and players must not contact coaches, evaluators, DWMHA Board members, the Tryout Coordinator, or the Technical Director regarding roster decisions or player evaluations.

After 48 hours, a family wishing to discuss a player's evaluation may submit a request to tryouts@whalers.org. The Tryout Coordinator will review the request and, where appropriate, arrange a discussion with relevant members of the selection committee.

12. Appeals and Conduct

Appeals related to evaluation scores, rankings, or roster decisions made in accordance with this process will not be considered. The independent evaluators' assessments are final.

An appeal may only allege that the approved tryout process was not followed. Appeals must be submitted in writing in accordance with the DWMHA Appeal Policy.

Parents, guardians, players, and team officials must use the established process and must not contact evaluators or members of the Executive or evaluation committee outside that process regarding evaluations or placements.

Repeated or harassing emails, text messages, phone calls, in-person confrontations, or abusive or threatening language directed toward DWMHA volunteers, evaluators, or officials may result in disciplinary action. Depending on the nature and severity of the conduct, consequences may include a written warning, suspension from DWMHA activities, removal from DWMHA facilities or events, or other sanctions under DWMHA policies and the Hockey Nova Scotia Code of Conduct.

DWMHA appreciates the cooperation of players and families in respecting the process and helping ensure that all discussions remain constructive, respectful, and focused on player development.



Appendix A: DWMHA 1–10 Evaluation Scale

Evaluators use the following scale when assessing player performance in each evaluation category.

Score	Performance	Criteria
10	Elite Performance	Executes extraordinarily well within the position and role. Clearly outperforms others at the same position and has a sustained, dominant impact. Players at this level are rare and clearly demonstrate the ability to succeed at the evaluated level.
9	Outstanding Performance	Demonstrates outstanding skill and decision-making within the position and role, with occasional elite-level performance. Clearly demonstrates a high probability of success at the evaluated level.
8	Superior Performance	Demonstrates superior skill and generally strong decisions. Positive plays clearly outnumber mistakes. Minor skill, consistency, effort, discipline, or emotional-control limitations may remain, but the player demonstrates a strong likelihood of success.
7	Above-Average Performance	Demonstrates above-average skill and contribution. Positive plays and decisions outnumber mistakes. Some physical, technical, consistency, effort, discipline, or emotional-control limitations may remain, but the player demonstrates the ability to compete at this level.
6	Average Performance	Demonstrates generally average performance for the evaluated level. Good plays and decisions are balanced by mistakes or areas requiring further development. The player warrants consideration, subject to the overall depth at the position.
5	Developing Performance	Demonstrates developing skills and may reach an acceptable standard with further development. Weaknesses in key areas are evident, and mistakes or poor decisions outnumber positive plays. Consideration may depend on overall positional depth.
4	Below-Average Performance	Demonstrates acceptable performance in only limited areas. Mistakes clearly outnumber positive plays, and deficiencies in skill, effort, decision-making, or game impact would make success at this level unlikely.
3	Limited Performance	Demonstrates very limited ability to perform successfully at the evaluated level. Significant deficiencies are evident in skill, decision-making, effort, or overall game impact.
2	Well Below Standard	Performance is well below the expected standard, with significant deficiencies across most evaluation areas and little evidence of readiness for this level.
1	Not Ready for This Level	Performance does not demonstrate readiness for the evaluated level. Significant deficiencies are evident across evaluation areas, and the player is not presently able to make a meaningful contribution at this level.