



2026-2027 Competitive Tryouts & Evaluations Process

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East Hants Minor Hockey Association (EHMHA)
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Purpose

The **EHMHA Competitive Tryout & Recreation Evaluation** process is designed to fairly assess each player's skills. Our core objectives are to:

- **Ensure Fair Placement:** Place players on teams that match their current skill level.
- **Support Growth:** Provide an environment where players can best develop their abilities.
- **Prioritize Fun:** Above all, ensure every player, parent & family has an enjoyable and rewarding hockey experience.

EHMHA wants to ensure that each player is given a fair evaluation and that all players are placed appropriately. Players have the most success and develop when they are placed at the appropriate level.

Goals

1. **Objective Assessment:** To deliver a fair, unbiased, and comprehensive evaluation of each player's complete skill set.
2. **Appropriate Placement:** To ensure every athlete is placed on a team that matches their current skill level, as demonstrated during the on-ice evaluations during tryouts & evaluations.
3. **Roster Flexibility:** To allow the association the flexibility to construct well-rounded teams, taking into account coaching philosophy, player attitude, and established skills.
4. **Consistency and Continuity:** To maintain a transparent evaluation process year over year, providing families with predictable expectations as players advance through the divisions.
5. **Balanced Competition:** To form teams that promote balanced, competitive play, ensuring all athletes can develop their skills, participate equitably, and enjoy the game.
6. **Developmental Feedback:** To provide meaningful feedback that supports and accelerates ongoing player development.

All Divisions - General Policies

1. The overall Evaluation Committee responsible for the set up and logistics of all EHMHA Evaluations for the 2026-2027 season will consist of the following:
 - a. Board Member
 - b. Board Member
 - c. Board Member
 - d. Board Member

The sole purpose of the Evaluation Committee is to establish the processes and procedures at all levels along with overall planning/implementation of the entirety of the tryout process - ice scheduling, evaluators, referees, bench staff, check-ins, technology etc.

The Competitive Tryout Committee (sub-committee) for the 2026 - 2027 season will consist of the following:

- VP Hockey Ops
- Development / Goalie Coordinator
- Director at Large
- EHMHA Member
- EHMHA Member
- EHMHA Member
- EHMHA Member

The sole purpose of this sub-committee will be to ensure the process and procedures at all levels are followed.

CONFLICTS : All conflicts of interest will be declared at the start of tryouts and balancing.

2. The group of evaluators will be determined by our Development Coordinator. This list is to be reviewed with the tryout sub-committee prior to our tryouts beginning.
3. All individual player ratings and scores will be held confidential within the selected members of the Executive Committee and evaluators. **Under no circumstances** will player ratings, or scores, be made public or disclosed to any individual not involved directly in the Team Selection process.
4. The ONLY Evaluation Committee members with administrative access to any tools used for evaluations will consist of EHMHA Board Members who are not in conflict with the division to ensure accuracy.
 - Conflicts will be defined before the tryouts will begin for Board Members that have a child participating in tryouts at the U11/U13/U15/U18 levels.
5. All members of the Competitive Tryout Committee will be required to sign a Confidentiality & Privacy Acknowledgement

Exceptional Status

1. Exceptional status will be defined as a player who is looking to move to an older age grouping of hockey while not being of that age grouping. The following criteria must be met for the player to be accepted on the team at the older age group.
2. The player must rank in the top 3 if trying out for Forward. Top 2 if trying out for Defense. Top 1 if trying out for Goalie.
3. **Superior Skill:** Performance must rank drastically above age peers, often proving dominant against players two to three years older.
4. **Physical Maturity:** The athlete must possess the body strength and growth profile to safely withstand physical contact and heavier play.

5. **Social-Emotional Readiness:** Mental toughness, emotional stability, and leadership qualities must match the demands of older teammates and higher competition.

Evaluator Guidelines

1. Evaluators will be chosen by both the VP Hockey OPs and Development / Goalie Coordinator with support from the Competitive Tryout sub-Committee.
2. There will be a debrief session the same day following the ice sessions per division to help ensure accuracy. The evaluators will congregate with members of the Competitive Tryout sub-Committee (that are not in conflict) to primarily check for anomalies. For example, if there are 6 evaluators and the player scores are 6, 6.5, 5.5, 7, 5, 3 then the “3” may require some discussion and context. This could become more of a factor should sessions be light on evaluators as the averaging impact would be higher ex. 6.5, 7, 6, 2.
 - a. Limit to 1 hour deliberation.
3. Development Coordinator is responsible to ensure data integrity and consistency throughout the tryout and evaluation process along with leading the debrief sessions in conjunction with our Hockey Development Professionals.
4. Players are identified in GrayJay by jersey color and number so no names are available to evaluators. Scores recorded in the GrayJay software are locked and not able to be adjusted following the conclusion of the evaluation session.
5. We would ask parents to please refrain from packing private hockey program socks and pant shells. **Players with private hockey pant shells or socks will be asked to change or leave the ice. Please wear EHMHA issued socks or plain colour socks. Please remove any stickers from Helmet prior to tryouts to ensure fair and concise deliberation.**
6. Evaluators will meet with the Competitive Tryout sub committee before tryouts begin to ensure consistency in the evaluation approach. The intent of the session is to review drill plans, expected skill demonstration and the nature of the evaluation.
7. Evaluators will be set up separately from spectators. We plan on establishing a debrief room for the evaluators to congregate and share notes (debrief) after the sessions. We ask that there be no parent interaction with evaluators during the entirety of the process.
 - a. U9, U11, U13, U15 and U18 requires parent or guardian to register their child at the check in desk. This is to ensure accuracy in the event of an injury that the parent or guardian can be contacted.

8. All Evaluators involved in the tryout process will be required to sign a Confidentiality & Privacy Acknowledgement.
9. Players will be evaluated based on the skills displayed during the on-ice sessions and not what group they begin the process in.

Import Rules

- Only one of the top two goalies shall be an out of area player. EHMHA reserves the right to not accept out of area players if it means that EHMHA players will be displaced. For example, if there is only one team in a division and we have two EHMHA goalies already then we will not accept out of area goalies in that division
- EHMHA will accept a maximum of four out of area players (including goalies) per team.
- EHMHA reserves the right, under exceptional circumstances, to approve additional out of area players.
- The limitation of four excludes any approved under age players from the EHMHA.

Absences & Injuries

1. The Tryout and Evaluation process provides an opportunity to evaluate players in a common forum to ensure proper placement at the most appropriate level. It is our expectation that all players will attend all tryout sessions.
2. There is recognition that there may be circumstances which preclude a player from attending sessions due to injury, bereavement, or other circumstances. Deadline for player to be placed on a team due to injury would be December 1st. If the player is unable to join the team they are assigned by December 1st, the player will lose their spot on the team.
3. Players who miss all or part of the tryout process will be handled based on the reason for their absence and the nature of their injury.
 - a. At the assessment and discretion of the tryout committee, the VP Hockey Ops and the Development / Goalie Coordinator, the missing player MAY be linked to a player in the tryout process who is deemed to be the closest in terms of ability/skill/score. Using previous playing experience, we will be reliant on our Development / Goalie Coordinator to properly assess and place player with an appropriate team.
 - b. Should a player be linked, this will form the basis for their on-ice scoring but will not necessarily result in the same placement as the player(s) they were linked to. The Competitive Tryout Committee, along with the incoming Coach, will decide on a case-by-case basis how absenteeism is handled. Prior year's coach's feedback may be utilized and consulted.

- c. If a player is linked and they are on the short list or bubble, their name will be included in the pre-vetted list provided for consideration for placement on the team.
- d. All injured player decisions will be documented by the Competitive Tryout Committee with rationale provided to the Executive for approval in advance.
- 4. For this policy to apply, parents need to notify the tryout committee (tryoutcommittee@ehpenguins.org) or VP of Hockey Operations or our Development / Goalie Coordinator in advance of tryouts for any pre-existing injuries or expected absences. All such instances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Divisional Processes

U11, U13, U15, U18 (AA/A/B)

- I. Each tryout group will be divided evenly into manageable sizes
- II. If time allows and based on registration numbers for try-outs. Players could participate in 2 x 1 hour skills sessions in 1 day, allowing for the intrasquad games to begin sooner to help expedite the process to aid in determining the teams more quickly.
 - A. U11 – For the 2026-2027 season, Phases 1 and 2 will be combined into a condensed, but robust, schedule. We aim to complete the evaluations quickly in a robust schedule to be released once registration numbers can be confirmed.
 - B. U13 – For the 2026-2027 season, Phases 1 and 2 will be combined into a condensed, but robust, schedule. We aim to complete the evaluations quickly in a robust schedule to be released once registration numbers can be confirmed.
 - C. U15 – For the 2026-2027 season, Phases 1 and 2 will be combined into a condensed, but robust, schedule. We aim to complete the evaluations quickly in a robust schedule to be released once registration numbers can be confirmed.
 - 1. Where checking hockey is introduced at the U15 level, we will be looking to hold specialized registration for our expected U15B team which does not allow checking. This will give the option to the player to begin their tryout at that level, rather than needing to attend the checking portion of the try-outs first.
 - 2. We are yet to be determined what level the highest ranked rep team will be placed. This will be dependent on registration numbers and the skills displayed during the try-out process (unless HNS requires an answer before try-outs begin).
 - D. U18 – Phases 1-2 will be intrasquad games. Further stages will be added as deemed necessary depending on the size of the group and how the various leagues shape up. **This may not be appeasable based on the numbers that register for the tryouts. We may have to be solely reliant on the skills sessions for evaluation purposes.**
 - E. After Phase 2, at all levels the players will be re-grouped and the prior scores will be reset heading into Phase 3. These new scores will be maintained throughout the balance of the tryout process, will be equally weighted for the remaining sessions, and will be the basis for any movement up, or down, as the stages progress and ultimately to determine final placements.

- F. The tryout process will begin with **Phase 1 Skills Sessions**, consisting of separate forward, defence, and goalie evaluations. All players will participate within their position groupings and will be further organized alphabetically by last name. Between four and eight evaluators will assess players during each session. While roster construction may vary based on registration numbers and team allocations within each age division, this process is generally based on a competitive roster size of 17 players, with final team rosters typically ranging from 15 to 20 players. Players who are parked during the evaluation process may receive less ice time than those requiring additional evaluation opportunities.
- G. Following the skills sessions, players will be ranked and placed into groups for **Phase 2 Intrasquad Games**. Where player positioning allows, groups will typically consist of **28 to 32 players**, including approximately **10 to 14 defencemen, 16 to 20 forwards, and 2 to 4 goalies**. All players will participate in a minimum of one game at each applicable competitive level (AA, A, or B), with four to eight evaluators assigned to each session.
- H. At the conclusion of the intrasquad game phase, players will either continue in the evaluation process or be released to the next appropriate level of tryouts. A final tryout group will then be established for the highest tier available within the age division (AA or A). A total of up to **23 players** will be selected to continue, and the Head Coach will be introduced while evaluations continue.
- I. During **Phase 3**, the highest-tier tryout group will participate in one on-ice session.. Where player positioning allows, the final tryout roster for the highest team will consist of **8 defencemen, 12 forwards, and 3 goalies**.
- J. Following this stage our Head Coach will then propose to the try-out sub committee their selections. They will need to justify their decisions and a collaborative effort will be required to ensure players are chosen for the right reasons. If a Head Coach is not declared, the team will be declared based on the evaluation scores alone.
- K. At the same time, the next level of the representative team tryout process will begin. Players released from the highest-tier team will automatically be assigned to the lower tier team.. Where player positioning allows, the final tryout roster at this level will consist of **6 defencemen, 9 forwards, and 2 goalies**. The Head Coach will be introduced. An on ice session will occur, then repeat step J.

- L. Throughout the process, players released from AA and A evaluations will automatically move to the next appropriate representative team level as outlined above. Final roster numbers may vary based on the total number of tryout registrants, player position distribution, and the number of goaltenders participating. Upon completion of evaluations, the **AA roster**, **A roster**, and where applicable the **B roster**, will be formally announced.
- M. Created groups - where it allows for larger groups
- N. Phase 2 Intersquad games - each player will receive minimum of 1 intersquad game per level of tryout
- O. Rosters to be determined during the process with player numbers taken into consideration with the number of players trying out
- P. AP Players will be provided to the higher tier team manager and will not be made public to the membership

Team Selection & Player Scoring

1. East Hants Minor Hockey Association (EHMHA) is committed to a tryout process that fairly evaluates, identifies, and selects players based on merit every season. Given the growth of our organization and the varying development rates of our players, annual evaluations are essential to ensure everyone plays at the appropriate level.

To ensure fairness during final team selections, EHMHA utilizes a specific tie-breaking rule for players on the evaluation boundary ("the bubble"):

- Second-Year Placement Rule: If a second-year player in an age category and a first-year player in that same category score identically during tryouts, placement priority is awarded to the second-year player.
- Defining a Tie: A tie is determined exclusively by the Competitive Tryout Committee when two players fall within a designated evaluation margin (for example, within 5 points on a 100-point scale, or within 0.5 points on a 10-point scale).
- Previous Level Tie-Breaker: If a returning player on the bubble is tied for a final roster spot at the level they played during the prior season, they will be placed on that team over the lower-level player.

This policy applies to the upcoming 2026 tryouts and will remain the standard procedure moving forward.

1. Players will be scored in each session on a scale of 1 thru 10. On-ice scoring will account for the majority of the players overall ranking, however, other factors such as coach feedback, opinion of the Hockey Development Professional, etc. may be factored in when applicable.
2. New to the process this year will be having a coaches input on final selections for a team. In the event that the coaches child is considered bottom 3 forwards (to make the team), bottom 2 defense (to make the team) or on the bubble with goaltending. The

selections will revert back to evaluators for decision to remove any potential bias from the process.

Process Outline

1. For the competitive tryout process, EHMHA will use our phase-based evaluation model. This will consist of Phases 1-3 and culminate with team selection.
 - a. Phase 1 – Skills and Drills, combined with Stage 2
 - b. Phase 2 – Phases 1/2 will be two (2) ice times with skills and drills with a minimum of 1 intrasquad games (at each level (skills and drills icetime will reduce as players are released to lower rep teams)) and will form the basis of the primary sort heading into Stage 3. At the conclusion of Stage 2, scores will be set to 0% of cumulative score, in other words, reset.
 - c. Stage 3 – will be intrasquad games and will be at least 1 session at all levels. During the session there can be lateral player movement. This will allow for lateral movement and provide 2 opportunities for players to change groups. (note that at stage 1 & 2, the group numbers are meaningless as they are all balanced to begin with. At stage 3, the groups will be in rank order).
2. The level of teams fielded at each age group is based on registration numbers, demonstrated skill levels, and exhibition game performance. EHMHA aims to maximize the number of the competitive teams at the highest level but we will not rush into this decision. The Competitive Tryout Committee will always assess this matter during the process but material discussions will commence during the intrasquad sessions and into the exhibition game(s).
3. Player placement/group movement decisions will be made at the conclusion of Stage 2 and 3. At any point along this process, the Competitive Tryout Committee can decide to a) assign a player to the recreational level or b) park a player at an appropriate level. It is not our goal to do either very often but we need to include this flexibility as it may be used to provide certain players every opportunity to play the highest level possible. You may experience more parked players during the try-out process to ensure players that are considered to be “on the bubble” get a fair look during the tryouts.

Recreation Level Evaluations

1. Recreation-level player evaluations will begin after the completion of Competitive Level tryouts. Attendance is mandatory to ensure teams are composed fairly and remain competitive throughout the season.
2. Each division may follow a slightly different format based on age group and logistical needs. The general structure for each level is as follows:
 - a. U9 Divisional Evaluation will consist of 2 skills and drills sessions per child to ensure accuracy to our evaluation process and proper determination of placement for our players of this age division. Game evaluation cannot occur at this level per HNS ruling.
 - b. U11 - Skills and Game Evaluation. Players will participate in 3 on-ice evaluation sessions:

Session 1: Skills-Based Evaluation x 1

Players will rotate through skill stations where evaluators will assess core technical abilities, including skating and stickhandling.

Session 2: Game-Based Evaluation (Scrimmage)

Players will be evaluated in a scrimmage format, consisting of two 21-minute straight-time periods. Line changes will occur every 1 minute 30 seconds to ensure equal ice time. Goalies will rotate based on attendance to ensure balanced assessment opportunities.

- c. U13 - Skills and Game Evaluation. Players will participate in 3 on-ice evaluation sessions:

Session 1: Skills-Based Evaluation x 1

Players will rotate through skill stations where evaluators will assess core technical abilities, including skating and stickhandling.

Session 2: Game-Based Evaluation (Scrimmage)

Players will be evaluated in a scrimmage format, consisting of two 21-minute straight-time periods. Line changes will occur every 1 minute 30 seconds to ensure equal ice time. Goalies will rotate based on attendance to ensure balanced assessment opportunities.

- d. U15 - Skills and Game Evaluation. Players will participate in 3 on-ice evaluation sessions:

Session 1: Skills-Based Evaluation x 1

Players will rotate through skill stations where evaluators will assess core technical abilities, including skating and stickhandling.

Session 2: Game-Based Evaluation (Scrimmage)

Players will be evaluated in a scrimmage format, consisting of two 21-minute straight-time periods. Line changes will occur every 1 minute 30 seconds to ensure equal ice time. Goalies will rotate based on attendance to ensure balanced assessment opportunities.

U15B Process can begin in conjunction with U15A or AA depending on registration numbers for those that do not wish to participate in checking hockey tryouts.

- e. U18 – As we finalize our preparations for the upcoming season, the Board of Directors is pleased to share an update regarding our U18 division capacity and team structures.
- Based on our current registration numbers, we are confident in our ability to field the following teams for the season:
 - **U18 Representative (U18 A):** We have secured sufficient registration numbers to officially field a U18 A team.
 - **U18 Recreation (U18 C):** Depending on our final registration tallies over the coming days, we are currently projecting to ice either one or two U18 C teams to accommodate all recreational players.

Our primary goal is to ensure that every registered player in our association has a place to play. We will monitor final registration numbers closely over the next week and share the finalized roster limits and team counts as soon as tryouts and sorting skates conclude.

Note on Competitive Releases (U11–U15)

Players who were released from competitive tryouts during the final ice session will automatically be placed in Group 1 of the Recreation draft within their respective divisions. These players were closely considered for competitive teams and are recognized as Group 1 candidates within the Recreation level.

Goaltender Evaluations

- There shall be a specialized ice time for goaltender evaluation during the tryout process. This is to ensure fairness in their assessment. While skills and gameplay will have a ranking assigned to goaltenders. To ensure we provide a fair assessment it is important that all goaltenders attend the specialized training session designed for them to be assessed properly.

Inquiries / Contact / Communication

- East Hants Minor Hockey Association reserves the right to remove players from the ice to ensure player safety remains of the utmost importance through the process.
- Questions should be sent to vpadmin@ehpenguins.org and vp_hockey@ehpenguins.org
- Please include a CLEAR subject in any email correspondence including the division, player name, and subject of the email ex. U13, John Doe, INJURY.
- Groupings and scheduling are set and balanced. It can be difficult to accommodate any requested changes and **we would ask that they not be made unless absolutely necessary**. Such requests may be considered, approved or declined, and the committee will assess on a case-by-case basis. Often once one exception is made, others follow.
- To ensure our volunteers can focus entirely on running a successful evaluation for the players, inquiries regarding grouping and placement will not be reviewed until the tryout process is fully complete. Once evaluations conclude, all emails will be reviewed in a timely manner. We will monitor incoming messages for common themes to address systemic adjustments where possible, but we cannot provide individual responses during the active tryout window due to the high volume of communication.
- **During the process please do ensure as parents you respect the 24 hour rule before reaching out to Board Members. Emails, phone calls and text messages will not be entertained during the 24 hour window.**
 - o <https://ehpenguins.org/47/EHMHA/pages/3082/CoachesManagers---Issue-Resolution-Process>