



HOCKEY CALGARY

U9 HALF-ICE ROSTER FORMATION GUIDE

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Overview:

- For all U9 half-ice, Two-Four Gameplay Model games, each team will split their team into 2 mini teams.
- Rosters will be split using two different methods: **Evenly Balanced and Modified A/B**
 - Guidelines for each roster formation can be found below in this document
- **A** roster will be referred to as the **Blue** roster while the **B** roster will be referred to as the **Red** roster.
- Hockey Calgary will determine the schedule for which roster formation method will be used throughout the season
- Schedule (Half-Ice games only):
 - Seeding Games
 - Sept 1 – Nov 30: **Evenly Balanced**
 - League Games and EMHW
 - Dec 1 – Jan 14: **Modified A/B**
 - Exhibition and Tournament Games
 - Sept 1 – Nov 30: **Evenly Balanced**
 - Dec 1 – Mar 31: **Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B**
 - Both coaches must agree in order to operate Modified A/B. Evenly Balanced is the default formation.

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Weekend	Date Sat	Date Sun	Season Component	Hockey Calgary Scheduled Games	Exhibition/Tournament Games
Weekend 1	27-Sep-25	28-Sep-25	Pre-Season	No HC Scheduled Games	Evenly Balanced
Weekend 2	04-Oct-25	05-Oct-25	Pre-Season		Evenly Balanced
Weekend 3	11-Oct-25	12-Oct-25	Pre-Season		Evenly Balanced
Weekend 4	18-Oct-25	19-Oct-25	Seeding Round	Evenly Balanced	Evenly Balanced
Weekend 5	25-Oct-25	26-Oct-25	Seeding Round	Evenly Balanced	Evenly Balanced
Weekend 6	01-Nov-25	02-Nov-25	Seeding Round	Evenly Balanced	Evenly Balanced
Weekend 7	08-Nov-25	09-Nov-25	Seeding Round	Evenly Balanced	Evenly Balanced
Weekend 8	15-Nov-25	16-Nov-25	Seeding Round	Evenly Balanced	Evenly Balanced
Weekend 9	22-Nov-25	23-Nov-25	Season Break	No HC Scheduled Games	Evenly Balanced
Weekend 10	29-Nov-25	30-Nov-25	Season Break		Evenly Balanced
Weekend 11	06-Dec-25	07-Dec-25	Regular Season	Modified A/B	Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 12	13-Dec-25	14-Dec-25	Regular Season	Modified A/B	Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 13	20-Dec-25	21-Dec-25	Regular Season	Modified A/B	Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 14	27-Dec-25	28-Dec-25	Winter Break	No HC Scheduled Games	Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 15	03-Jan-26	04-Jan-26	Regular Season	Modified A/B	Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 16	10-Jan-26	11-Jan-26	EMHW	Modified A/B	Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 17	17-Jan-26	18-Jan-26	Regular Season	<i>Three-Quarter Cross-Ice - Evenly Balanced</i>	Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 18	24-Jan-26	25-Jan-26	Regular Season		Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 19	31-Jan-26	01-Feb-26	Regular Season		Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 20	07-Feb-26	08-Feb-26	Regular Season		Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 21	14-Feb-26	15-Feb-26	Regular Season		Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 22	21-Feb-26	22-Feb-26	Regular Season		Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 23	28-Feb-26	01-Mar-26	Post Season	No HC Scheduled Games	Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 24	07-Mar-26	08-Mar-26	Post Season		Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 25	14-Mar-26	15-Mar-26	Post Season		Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B
Weekend 26	21-Mar-26	22-Mar-26	Post Season		Evenly Balanced or Modified A/B

Background

- North America predominantly operates programming using a team-based (Rigid Team Rosters) approach where kids are placed on teams at the beginning of the season based on like-skilled abilities. This has a major benefit but also has some drawbacks.
- ‘Creating teams for the purposes of competition’ prioritizes creating the ideal environment for practices while still creating meaningful competition.
- Rigid Team Rosters vs. Free-Flowing Rosters
 - Rigid Team Rosters – creates teams as the beginning of the season for all hockey activities (practices, games, team activities, etc.). While this has benefits for team culture and dynamics, it also restricts players to a specific group of players/skill throughout the season. As players

develop at different rates throughout the season, this format does not allow flexibility to move players up and down groups/teams for the benefit of their individual player development.

- Free-Flowing Rosters – creates large groups of players (~2 teams worth of players) for practices/development. ‘Formal Teams’ are formed for the purposes of competition and then are unformed for practices/development. This structure allows players to move up and down for practices and games within their large group at various points of the season to account for different levels of growth for each individual player. The large group gives the flexibility to create more than 1 team for games, which allows flexibility to form different types of teams (Evenly Balance, Modified A/B, etc.), which challenges players by putting them in different environments.
- ‘Best of Both Worlds’
 - Teams are still formed at the beginning of the season, following the Rigid Team Roster model
 - Practice Environment – U7 and U9 teams share practices and can easily accomplish a free-flowing roster construction in a practice environment by splitting players in the like skilled groups during station practices. Many teams do this already, but increased collaboration is beneficial. Both teams on the ice should work together to run their practices and treat their individual teams like a ‘large group’, similar to the Free-Flowing Roster model. Teams would still have opportunity to conduct some drills/practices on their own as an individual team.
 - Game Environment – Teams are still formal. However, in a ‘split squad two-four game’ format in U9 which is currently operating, teams have some ability within the confines of a Rigid Team Structure to have some free-flowing rosters (Evenly Balance, Modified A/B, etc.). This is currently permitted at U7, but not at U9.

Rationale for Evenly Balanced and Modified A/B Rosters

- Increased focus on individual player development
 - Free-Flowing Rosters allow players to experience all the benefits of different roster groupings. Different player groupings can easily be accomplished in practices, with an increased benefit when teams work together to make a larger group. The majority of players would experience the following benefits during the season depending on the grouping (evenly balanced, modified A/B).
 - Benefits of ‘Like Skilled’ abilities
 - Easier to coach and modify drills – targeted instruction
 - Personalized development
 - Evenly Balanced - Team placement at the beginning of the season allows for a reasonable discrepancy in player ability to facilitate both meaningful competition and provide an environment for players to be creative.
 - Modified A/B - allows for increased splitting of players into ‘Like Skilled’ abilities from time to time to tighten discrepancies in skill periodically throughout the season
 - Benefits of ‘Being the Best’
 - Develops confidence and creativity – different players will experience this benefit depending on the formation (Evenly Balance vs. Modified A/B)
 - Players learn how to play with, include, and get the most out of lesser skills teammates
 - Evenly Balanced – Allows higher skilled players to be the best with a reasonable skill discrepancy to develop creativity

- Modified A/B - Allows middle skilled players on the team to experience 'being the best'
- Benefits of 'Being Challenged'
 - Develops resilience, work ethic, and creativity
 - Evenly Balanced – Allows middle and lesser skilled players the opportunity to be challenged
 - Modified A/B – Allows the top and middle skilled players to have an increased challenge
- Benefits of 'Being Involved'
 - Evenly Balanced – Allows a reasonable discrepancy that keeps all players involved
 - Modified A/B - Lesser skilled players will get the opportunity to touch the puck more and be more involved in the play in a modified top-down grouping. Higher skilled players will be challenged more in a top-down grouping

Evenly Balanced Formation Guidelines

- Coaches will internally rank their players and split their players into 2 groups evenly balancing their teams
- Sample Below:

Player Ranking	Evenly Balanced
Player 1	Team 1
Player 2	Team 2
Player 3	Team 1
Player 4	Team 2
Player 5	Team 1
Player 6	Team 2
Player 7	Team 1
Player 8	Team 2
Player 9	Team 1
Player 10	Team 2
Player 11	Team 1
Player 12	Team 2
Player 13	Team 1
Player 14	Team 2
Player 15	Team 1
Player 16	Team 2
Player 17	Team 1
Player 18	Team 2

Modified A/B Roster Formation Guidelines

- Coaches will internally rank their players and split their players into 3 groups using a top-down approach
 - Group 1 – top ~4 players
 - Group 2 – middle ~10 players
 - Group 3 – bottom ~4 players
- Please note that the above numbers are approximate and up to the coaches to determine the exact number of players in each group
- Group 1 would be identified as players on the **Blue** roster (these players will likely be identified as **Blue** roster players for both games)
- Group 3 would be identified as players on the **Red** roster (these players will likely be identified as **Red** roster players for both games)
- Group 2 would be identified as either **Blue** or **Red** roster players (these players will likely play 1 game each on the **Blue** and **Red** rosters)
- Sample Below – Group 2 players games should play 1 game on the **Blue** roster and 1 game on the **Red** roster
 - Note – this is just a sample. Some teams may have different numbers of players in each of the groups. However, Group 2 should include at least half of the players on the team.
- NOTE:** Teams will not switch sides at the intermission/half. Teams will play the same opponent's mini team for both halves

Player Ranking	Ex. Traditional Evenly Balanced	Group	Ex. Game 1	Ex. Game 2
Player 1	Team 1	Group 1	Blue	Blue
Player 2	Team 2		Blue	Blue
Player 3	Team 1		Blue	Blue
Player 4	Team 2		Blue	Blue
Player 5	Team 1	Group 2	Blue	Red
Player 6	Team 2		Red	Blue
Player 7	Team 1		Blue	Red
Player 8	Team 2		Red	Blue
Player 9	Team 1		Blue	Red
Player 10	Team 2		Red	Blue
Player 11	Team 1		Blue	Red
Player 12	Team 2		Red	Blue
Player 13	Team 1		Blue	Red
Player 14	Team 2		Red	Blue
Player 15	Team 1	Group 3	Red	Red
Player 16	Team 2		Red	Red
Player 17	Team 1		Red	Red
Player 18	Team 2		Red	Red