

The Benefits of Small Area Play.

Small area drills and games are something that I implement into my training sessions regularly.

I firmly believe that small area drills and games will significantly improve a player's ability to read, react and adapt to any game situation quicker. These games provide more constant pressure which forces players to make decisions faster.

While providing a more challenging environment for more experienced players it also provides more opportunity for less experienced players to be involved in the play, getting them more time with the puck which will help them develop their skill faster.

Small area hockey can help improve positional play and create good game habits. It encourages players to move the puck quickly when they have it and be available when they don't. Defensively it encourages players to take away space quickly, have good body and stick positioning and awareness of where players are. With the small area creating more opportunities for turnovers, this helps players improve their quick transitions between offense and defence.

For younger grades, games can be played cross rink. On some rinks, this allows for two games to be running at once, creating more beneficial opportunities for the players and at less cost for families. On a smaller rink where it is not possible to run two games, an area can be made smaller by moving the goals in and marking off the outer area. Where other resources are not available, this can be done with cones. This can provide another challenge for players who are forced to control the puck more without boards to keep it in.

Bullet point benefits:

- Improve skating – agility and quickness off the mark.
- Improve stickhandling – controlling the puck when under more constant pressure.
- Create better team players – having to move the puck quicker and more often, working together as a team.
- Increases the intensity of trainings and games.
- Improve decision making – earlier, quicker and better decisions from being under more constant pressure.
- Improve game awareness.
- Improve positional play and create good game habits.
- Improvement at all ages and ability levels.





Small area work at training is beneficial for everyone. I believe small area drills and games should be implemented into trainings for all ages and abilities. As a general rule, I use approximately 15 to 20 minutes at my training sessions on these types of drills.

Here are some examples of the small area drills and games that I use at my training sessions:

- Keep away or king of the ring
- Corner battles – 1v1, 2v2 & 3v3
- Backwards Forwards Tag – no puck or sticks
- Small area skating drills (using face off circles as a guide or your stick as an obstacle)
- Small area games:
 - Half court touch up (great for when you only have one goalie at training).
 - 3 on 3 (small area marked off - adding different rules, for example; forehand touches only or backwards skating only.
 - Buy a Player
 - Gretzky
 - 1, 2, 3 Thunder – shootout game

Not only is hockey in a smaller area beneficial, it's a tonne of fun!

I hope that this encourages more teams to implement small area work into parts of their training sessions if they are not already doing so. This will be a great tool that will significantly help your players and teams improve.

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

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