



Program Details - The What

Yeti League is a Glacier Hockey Association (GHA) and Flathead Valley Hockey Association (FVHA) cooperative local league program for mostly Mite (8U) and Squirt (10U) age groups, but it is also open to those who have attained their Learn-to-Skate and Learn-to-Play Hockey requirements through each organization.

USA Hockey Flex rostering allows the freedom to create informal house leagues, for organizations to mix age groups, and, with the cooperative efforts of GHA and FVHA, will allow mixing of GHA and FVHA members. However, to utilize the Flex option all participants must be on one USA Hockey association registry. For Yeti to work, Flex rostering must be used. All participants of Yeti League will be entered as Flex participants on the FVHA registry (Jodi Harms Registrar).

Program Format

Practices schedules vary between the two organizations but will be offered to practice with the child's peer groups - i.e. Mite practice or Squirt practice - and will consist of ADM-style practice formats composed by certified coaches.

Games are mainly played on Fridays from 5:15-6:15 at either Stumptown Ice Den in Whitefish or Woodland Ice Center in Kalispell. There will be periodic adjustments to accommodate rink scheduling. See league schedule.

Two sessions are available: October-December and January-March. Sessions are eight weeks plus a playoff week.

Games will be played half-ice to align with age appropriate development.

For Pricing, Schedule, and Registration, see affiliate organization website:

[Flathead Valley Hockey Association, Kalispell](https://www.flatheadflames.org/)

[<https://www.flatheadflames.org/>]

[Glacier Hockey Association, Whitefish](http://www.glacierhockey.org/)

[<http://www.glacierhockey.org/>]

Coaching

Any level CEP (expired is ok) and completion of any age module on record. A current background check (MAHA) and Safesport are required. New coaches: a module must be completed before season starts (recommend the module for the age you're working with) and must complete CEP by 12/31.

Team Composition

In this inaugural season, we are hoping for eight teams divided into two divisions. Level 1 would be initiation entry (approximately mites) and Level 2 would be intermediate entry (approximately squirts). Experience and skill level of the skater will also be taken into account for level placement. The actual number of teams will be dependent on registration. Players and coaches from both associations will be represented on *each* team. Kids will be assigned to teams by draft in an effort to make each team equally skilled. Teams will be re-drafted for each of the two sessions.

Referees

This league provides a great opportunity for young or new ref's who complete the USA Hockey Referee credentials to gain experience. The Yeti League will allow ref's who are still members of youth travel teams to hone their skills and develop a passion for refereeing while not interfering with their travel schedule.

Travel

For those interested in out of town travel, tournament teams can be assembled and rostered (either association). Coaches will need to have correct credentials and players must play with the appropriate age group (age/citizenship verification is necessary).

For Parents - The Why

- Increase skill development. Better hockey fundamentals and more creativity.
- Increased ice time due to smaller team size - even without the weekend travel to games, with a smaller roster per team, your player will have twice as much ice time per game.
- More puck touches and participation for every level of player.
- Adjust the size of the skating surface in relation to size of the participant - kids should not be practicing and playing on same size rink as adults.
- Grow the great sport of hockey! Retain kids who would otherwise drop-off due to exponential cost/travel/weekend commitment associated with travel hockey. Provide an opportunity for kids who are less experienced the ability to try hockey without the required commitment currently inherent with travel hockey. Provide a more effective incubator for skill development, which will improve the likelihood the new skater will develop a passion for the sport. Expand our base-number of participants at the younger ages to develop successful competitive teams at the older age groups.

What other programs around the state are doing:

- Missoula has tryouts for 10U Travel A, Travel B, and Squirt Select (C house rec, plays 3-4 tournaments) plus four house teams
- Bozeman had 10U A and B, but may have only A next year and require all the kids to play in their Mountain League. They had six teams in the fall and four teams in the spring.
- Helena may have no travel for 10U - they currently have five 10U teams.

Related Articles & Videos:

[Minnesota Hockey Cross-Ice Squirt League article](https://www.minnesotahockey.org/news_article/show/277334-cross-ice-squirt-league-maximizes-development)

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[NHL Analytics Tracking of 8U Hockey Players video](https://youtu.be/CB_Ygapyl7c)

(https://youtu.be/CB_Ygapyl7c)

[From Child's View, Parents Find Full-Ice Hockey No Fun video](https://youtu.be/cXhxNq59pWg)

(<https://youtu.be/cXhxNq59pWg>)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What about icing and offsides? Will my kid be late learning about how to play the blue line?

A: Most coaches can teach a player with good skills offsides and icing in about 5 to 10 minutes. Icing is not a skill maneuver. Offsides is not a skill maneuver. Battling and making quick decisions in a crowded area builds skill. Building quick reflexes and fast decision-making ability takes years to develop. This is our focus.

Q: What if my child gets bored?

A: This is highly unlikely! The cross/half-ice game is quick and demands the engagement of all players on the ice. Players will have more ice time and more puck touches.

Q: What if I want to travel?

A: This is still an option. Tournaments are ala-carte, and you and other families (with a properly certified Coach) may play in as many tournaments as you want. You are not required to travel, but can go out of town as often as you and others would like. The goal here is to have more actual game time than windshield time. Traveling teams must be rostered.

"We play small-area games during our practices and it helps us become better players. It's great to see cross-ice hockey as the standard for young players. There's no need to play full-ice at the youngest ages. In cross-ice you really get a chance to improve your puckhandling, among other skills."

~Zach Parise

Minnesota Wild, 2010 U.S. Olympian

Other supporting comments

Joe Bonnett - USA Hockey, ADM Regional Manager

As your 10U player trains in station-based practice and small areas, they will acquire skill and hockey IQ at a greater rate, a more efficient rate, because of the ADM recommendations. As your child progresses through 10U, you will see their comfort in handling the puck, skating with the puck, playing in traffic, passing and competing. Soon these skills will lead to success on the full ice sheet, and in the long-term, the emphasis on those skills in the smaller-ice structure will give your child a higher ceiling of skills and ability, helping them reach their full potential rather than plateauing.

Beyond that though, the ultimate goal is helping each player reach their full *long-term* potential. Championships at 10U aren't necessarily the best measure of true player development, especially in a late-specialization sport like ice hockey. The real excitement begins in subsequent years, when your child begins displaying outstanding skills and a more advanced hockey IQ. It's then that many hockey parents realize that having a 12U or 14U child with a high level of skills and smarts is much more exciting than winning 10U games before Halloween."

Ian Armstrong - Seattle Junior Hockey Association

"The real benefit will be in the long term," he said. "With the cross-ice 8U and half-ice 10U, by the time these kids are 12U players and beyond, they're going to display a lot more skill development and it won't only be the top one or two players, it'll be every player."

As for the skeptics, Armstrong does his best to address their concerns.

"Some people thought it wasn't 'real hockey' because it wasn't played on an adult-sized sheet, but we addressed that by comparing it to other youth sports. Baseball is huge here, but youth baseball doesn't put 10-year-olds on the mound at Safeco Field. They aren't roaming that outfield or running those 90-foot bases. The game would be awful and the skill development would be minimal. That's not what we want for our kids. For the people who want to listen and think it through, it doesn't take long for it to make sense."

A part of that conversation usually involves questions about how kids will learn rules, like icing and offside, and for that, there are numerous answers, including several small-area games and also ice markers for drawing lines.

The oft-vilified screen time can also be an ally, as many 10-year-olds already understand icing and offside thanks to their PlayStation or Xbox. For those who don't, Armstrong and his fellow coaches can assuredly teach them in about 10 minutes on the ice, which is a miniscule price to pay in exchange for the dramatic gains in skill development and engagement afforded by small-ice hockey.

"I feel like the game lost some of its spirit of fun; it's spirit of playing for the right reasons," said Armstrong. "This half-ice 10U initiative, we're doing it for the right reasons. We're not doing this because we were told we have to do it. We're doing it because it makes total sense. We're doing it for the kids."

Session 1 Evaluation and Game Schedule

Day/Date/Time	Event	Location
Wednesday, 10/3 6-6:55pm	Yeti Evaluation Level 1 and Level 2	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 10/5 5:15-6:15pm	Yeti Evaluation Level 1 and Level 2	Stumptown Ice Den
Wednesday, 10/10 6-6:55pm	Yeti Evaluation Level 1 and Level 2	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 10/12 5:15pm	Level 1 Game #1	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 10/12 6:30pm	Level 2 Game #1	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 10/19 5:15pm	Level 1 Game #2	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 10/19 6:30pm	Level 2 Game #2	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 10/26 5:15pm	Level 1 Game #3	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 10/26 6:30pm	Level 2 Game #3	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 11/2 5:00pm	Level 1 Game #4	Woodland Ice Center
Friday, 11/2 5:00pm	Level 2 Game #4	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 11/9 5:00pm	Level 1 Game #5	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 11/9 5:00pm	Level 2 Game #5	Woodland Ice Center
Friday, 11/16 5:00pm	Level 1 Game #6	Woodland Ice Center
Friday, 11/16 5:00pm	Level 2 Game #6	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday 11/23	HOLIDAY - NO GAMES	
Sunday, 12/2 4:00pm	Level 1 Game #7	Woodland Ice Center
Sunday, 12/2 5:00pm	Level 2 Game #7	Woodland Ice Center
Friday, 12/14 5:00pm	Level 1 Game #8	Stumptown Ice Den
Friday, 12/14 5:00pm	Level 2 Game #6	Woodland Ice Center
Friday, 12/21 Time TBA	Level 1 & 2 Playoff	Woodland Ice Center