

2026-2027 Competitive Tryouts & Evaluations Document

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Bedford & District Minor Hockey Association

61 Gary Martin Drive, Bedford, NS B4B 0G7



Purpose

The key objective of the Bedford & District Minor Hockey Association (BDMHA) Competitive Tryout and Recreation Evaluation process is to conduct an objective evaluation of player skills and place players where they have the opportunity to participate at a level commensurate with their abilities, further develop their skills and most importantly, have fun.

BDMHA wants to ensure that each player is given a fair evaluation and that all players are placed at the appropriate level for their abilities.

Goals

- To provide a fair and impartial assessment of a player's total hockey skills.
- To ensure that players have the opportunity of being selected to a team appropriate to their skill levels as determined during the on-ice evaluations of the current year.
- To provide BDMHA with the opportunity and flexibility to build a team based in part on our coaching philosophy and knowledge of player skills and attitude.
- To provide uniformity and consistency in the evaluation process such that a player and parent expectations are consistent from year to year as players move through the various levels of the association's programs.
- To form teams to maintain balanced and competitive play where the athletes can develop and participate equitably and have fun playing hockey during the season.
- To provide feedback in order to facilitate player development.

All Divisions - General Policies

The overall Evaluation Committee responsible for the set up and logistics of all BDMHA Evaluations for the **2026-2027 season** will consist of Courtney Steves (Divisional VP) Brad Bodnarchuk (VP Competitive), Chris Young (Divisional VP), Leigh Anne Dingwall (VP Operations), and Matt Oxford (BDMHA Administrative Coordinator).

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 Brad Bodnarchuk (VP of Competitive), Ken Lenihan (Member at large), Dave Thibeu (non parent) and Matt Oxford (BDMHA Administrative Coordinator).

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

CONFLICTS:

- **U11** – NIL
- **U13** – Leigh Anne Dingwall (VP Operations), Chris Young (VP Recreation)
- **U15** – Brian Furdas (President), Rob Dickson (VP Development), Mike Hurley (VP Finance), David Denny (Secretary)
- **U18** – NIL

The executives above will be removed from any decision/discussion pertaining to levels their children or family members play at.

The Competitive Tryout Committee will establish a group of evaluators and will work with this group to establish the drills to be used for players evaluation.

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, scores, or placement relative to others be made public or disclosed to any individual not involved directly in the Team Selection process.

The ONLY Evaluation Committee member with administrative access to any tools used for evaluations will be the BDMHA Administrative Coordinator, Matt Oxford.

All members of the Competitive Tryout Committee will be required to sign a Confidentiality & Privacy Acknowledgement.

Evaluator Guidelines

Evaluators will be chosen by both the Divisional VP with support from the Competitive Tryout Committee.

From **2024-2025 & 2025-2026** and to remain in effect for **2026-2027**: Evaluation sessions have been shortened from 50 minutes to 45 minutes for the sole purpose of allowing extra time for evaluator debriefs in between sessions. We will establish a debrief room near ice level where the evaluators can congregate and review the scores to primarily check for any anomalies. For example, if there are 6 evaluators and the player scores are say 6, 6.5, 5.5, 7, 6, 4 then the '4' 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, 6.5, 3.

It is our goal to create a set of evaluators for each level that will consist of an overall evaluation lead and a robust group of evaluators. We will utilize a combination of paid external evaluators and some former coach volunteers. The desired mix will be 2/3 paid independent and 1/3 former coach.

In the past, we have seen sessions with a less than ideal number of evaluators, for a variety of reasons despite the best of intentions. It is our hope that supplementing potential shortages from a pre-vetted pool of former coaches (at least one level removed), along with post session evaluator debriefs, will aid in creating more consistency and accuracy in evaluation scoring. The post-session debrief should help to eliminate or smooth any biases potentially remaining (after the vetting and after the 1-2 levels removed).

Evaluation leads are 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 Professional.

Evaluators will use the GrayJay software and BDMHA tablets will be provided in order to digitally record player scores during the evaluation process. All evaluators will be pre-trained on how to properly use the GrayJay scoring system. Paper scoring sheets, along with the GrayJay App, will be available as a backup, in the event of technology (wifi) and battery issues. Some

evaluators may be on their phones during sessions and this may be due to technology issues noted above and them using the GrayJay App on their phones.

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.

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 BDMHA issued socks or plain colour socks.

Evaluators will meet with the Hockey Development Professional 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.

Evaluators will be set up separately from spectators. We plan on establishing a debrief room in one of the unused dressing rooms 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.

Parents are NOT permitted to be at ice level during evaluations. They are required to watch from the available space accessible from the second floor at the HRM 4-Pad.

All Evaluators involved in the tryout process will be required to sign a Confidentiality & Privacy Acknowledgement.

Players will be evaluated based on the skills displayed during the on-ice sessions and not what group they begin the process in.

Absences & Injuries

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.

There is recognition that there may be circumstances which preclude a player from attending sessions due to injury, bereavement, or other circumstances.

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.

At the assessment and discretion of the tryout committee, the Divisional VP and the Hockey Development Professional, 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.

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 will also be utilized and consulted.

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.

All injured player decisions will be documented by the Competitive Tryout Committee with rationale provided to the Executive for approval in advance.

For this policy to apply, parents need to notify the tryout committee (tryoutcommittee@bedfordblues.com) or Divisional VP, VP of Operations or our administrator, Matt Oxford) 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

U13-AAA

All registered players for U13-AAA are guaranteed two ice times which will begin on **Saturday, September 12th, 2026**.

Given a slight change to the Hockey Nova Scotia Seasonal Structure, we will evaluate ALL players who selected to tryout for U13 Competitive on **September 12 and 13, 2026** as part of this year's evaluation session for this level. The sessions on the 12th and 13th will form the baseline for the players Stage 1 and 2 evaluation sessions for the **2026-2027 season**.

AFTER the **September 13th** session, the overall U13 competitive group will be split into two groups. One group will continue along in the U13AAA tryout process per the schedule posted. The other group will come back on, or after, **September 20th** to continue along with the AA/A/B evaluation process.

The first two sessions of the U13 competitive tryout process for **2026-2027** will include 1 skills session (goalies separate) and 1 intrasquad session. Those continuing on in the U13AAA process will participate in a further intrasquad session before proceeding into our exhibition game format. Players can be parked or released at any stage from the 14th and onward.

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

Player Groupings

Initial groups (ex. Mixed Group 1, 2, 3 etc.) will each be formed with players from all levels and will be balanced. The balancing will be primarily based on the level of play for the **2025-2026 season**. Prior level will be used as a rough guide for initial group balancing only. On the ice, players will be placed into station groups by the on-ice facilitators. This is to ensure each player is given an equal opportunity.

Each tryout group will be divided evenly into manageable sizes.

- **U11** – For the **2026-2027 season**, stages 1 and 2 will be combined into a condensed, but robust, schedule. We aim to complete 80% of the evaluation process in 4 sessions on the **20th and 21st of September, 2026**. The final stage will be ranked intrasquad

sessions per the posted schedule. At this time, we do NOT plan to utilize exhibition games as part of our **2026-2027 U11 evaluation process**. Our association uses exhibition games for a variety of purposes with a main purpose being to assess the team mix at each level. For the past 5+ years, we have had 2xU11B, 2xU11A and 2xU11AA. We are planning on the same mix for the **2026-2027 season** therefore can rely less on exhibition games at this level.

- **U13** – Stages 1-2 will be part of a combined process with U13AAA as outlined above and will consist of a skill/battle-based session and an intrasquad game. Stage 3 will be intrasquad games and stages 4 and 5 will be exhibition games. Players can be parked, released or shuffled at each stage after stage 2.
- **U15** – Stages 1-2 will be intrasquad games and Stage 3 will also be intrasquad. Exhibition games will be part of the process in part to help determine team mix.
- **U18** – Stages 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.

After Stage 2, at all levels other than U13AAA, the players will be re-grouped and the prior scores will be reset heading into Stage 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.

Team Selection & Player Scoring

For the **2023 tryouts**, there was a rule that no second year returning BDMHA player within an age group would play at a lower level of hockey than what they played in their first year at the age group. This rule was eliminated for the **2024 and 2025 tryouts** and will remain the case for **2026**.

Given the size of our organization and the differing development stages of all players, we need to allow for a process that identifies, and chooses, the most deserving player on an annual basis. Should a returning player be 'on the bubble' and tied for placement (as determined by the Competitive Tryout Committee – ex. within 5 points on a 100 point scale or within 0.5 points on a 10 point scale) at the level he/she played at the prior season, they will be placed back at that level.

Please note: If parents want their player(s) to be placed at a lower level for any reason, they can request this by contacting the Competitive Tryout Committee. We ask that this is done as soon as possible and, ideally, prior to the completion of the Stage 4 sessions and preferably no later than **September 27th, 2026**.

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. maybe factored in when applicable.

Process Outline

For the competitive tryout process, BDMHA will use our stage-based evaluation model. This will consist of Stages 1-5 and culminate with team selection. Our process will allow for potential promotion, demotion, or lateral movement in stage 3 and beyond.

- **Stage 1** – traditionally Spring ID, not held therefore combined with Stage 2.
- **Stage 2** – Stages 1/2 will be two (2) ice times with either skills, battles or intrasquad games (depending on level) 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.
- **Stage 3** – will be primarily intrasquad games, except U11, and will be 2 sessions at all levels. Between the two sessions there can be lateral player movement, movement up a group or movement down a group. This will allow for promotion, demotion, 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).
 - NOTE: Group 3 players can move to Group 2, laterally to Group 3, or released to recreation. While movement is possible, it may not always be the case.
- **Stage 4** – will be exhibition game(s) and will now be more of a stage where players are starting to settle into their level. Movement at this stage will be rare and the majority of the movement will be down.
- **Stage 5** – will consist of a Coach's Skate/Session/Selection depending on scheduling. It may include having the named Coach observe the final exhibition game(s) and, with the assistance of the HDP, and, under the guidance of the Competitive Tryout Committee, participate in the selection of the final spots.

The level of teams fielded at each age group is based on registration numbers, demonstrated skill levels, and exhibition game performance. BDMHA 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). All communicated decisions on the number of teams at a particular level will be final.

Player placement/group movement decisions will be made at the conclusion of Stage 2, 3, 4, 5. 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.

During the tryout process, some players will be assigned to the recreation level. These players will not have to participate in the recreation assessment process as their scores from the competitive tryouts will be used when drafting teams at the recreation level.

Recreation Level Evaluations

A New Approach to Recreation Team Selection

Last season, we piloted a different approach to team selection at the U18 Recreation level. Rather than holding separate Recreation evaluation skates, we used information already available to us to group players by similar levels of experience and ability.

This included a player's previous year or years of hockey, prior divisions and levels of play, coach evaluations, player statistics where available, and competitive tryout scores for players who participated in tryouts.

Overall, we were pleased with how the process worked, and this season we will expand this approach to all Recreation divisions from **U11 through U18**.

As a result, **there will not be separate Recreation evaluation skates for U11–U18 this season.**

Instead, we will use multiple sources of information to help us create appropriate player groupings, including:

- Competitive tryout results, where applicable
- Previous coach year-end evaluations
- Player statistics and available historical information
- Previous divisions and levels of play
- Other relevant information available to the association

Players will then be placed into groups of generally similar ability and experience. Coaches will select players from those groupings during the team-selection process, with the goal of creating teams that are as balanced and competitive as reasonably possible.

Please keep in mind that Recreation team selections cannot begin until competitive tryouts for the applicable division have been completed and the Recreation coaching staff has been identified. We appreciate everyone's patience while that process takes place.

Inquiries / Contact / Communication

tryoutcommittee@bedfordblues.com

Inquiries pertaining to any absences, illnesses, or injuries – please send to this mailbox asap once known.

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.

Complaints relating to grouping and placement, will not be entertained during the process and will be responded to upon completion in a reasonable time frame. We will evaluate the email flow to ensure any themes are noted and corrected, if possible, but we simply won't have time to deal with the volume of email while trying to execute a successful process for the majority.

We are making every attempt to make things as clear, fair and robust as possible but, with 450+ kids trying out, mistakes will be made and are unavoidable. We will do our absolute best to eliminate or limit as much as possible but, at the end of the day, we are all volunteers trying to kick off the season in as coherent a fashion as humanly possible. We appreciate your patience, understanding and cooperation.