

Games

By Susan Ellis

Playing games during on-ice practices are an important part of each practice. Almost everyone from young kids to masters enjoys the fun, challenge, and laughter games can bring to a practice. They are also useful in promoting endurance, starting and turning ability, uninhibited agility, stability and instability, incorporation of game strategy and tactics, foot work, team work, change of routine, and just plain enjoyment of the sport of skating.

Any game has inherent risks so be careful when choosing games that all skaters in the group have the ability to maneuver safely in the game. Games like British Bulldog can be fun and fairly safe with some intro level groups, but as their speeds increase you must consider whether all skaters have the ability to maneuver safely in the game. If not, don't play it. Collisions can be frequent. If you see a game has gotten out of hand, call the game and either reissue safety rules, modify the rules to be safer (e.g.: must have two skates on ice at all times), or change to a safer game completely.

This is only a brief sampling of some high-energy games.

Twin tag

If you have 14 or fewer skaters confine them to $\frac{1}{3}$ ice, twenty or less to $\frac{1}{2}$ ice, thirty to $\frac{3}{4}$ ice.

Skaters divide in pairs and spread out with their pair standing right beside them. Make sure skaters are not too close to boards or boundary.

Appoint one person to be the chaser and one the chasee. All other pairs remain stationary.

The chaser chases the chasee and if tagged they switch roles. The objective of the chasee is to change off with someone else before they are caught. They do this by grabbing the arm of one of the other pairs. The chasee now becomes that person's new stationary partner and the other person who was with the stationary partner is now released from the pair and becomes the new chasee. The chaser must now try to catch the new chasee.

Once the athletes all understand how to play, make it more complicated by having more than one chaser and chasee. I've had as many as 5 sets with a large group and the game gets fast and furious with not a lot of rest time before you are on the move again, but be careful to keep your head up and be aware of where other skaters are going.

Variation for small groups:

Dot tag: If you have a group smaller than 12, assign each skater to a dot or place inside a certain zone, say blue line to end boards. You will have one person start out as the chaser and one as the chasee as above. To change off, the chasee only needs to tag a person on a dot, and that person is the new chasee.

Cops and Robbers

The goal is for the cops to catch all the robbers and put them in jail. Best with groups of 15 or more. Play area will depend on size of group.

Assign a spot for a 'jail', say a certain hockey circle. Assign 2 to 4 Jail Guards. Their job is to guard the jail against jail breaks.

Assign 2 to 4 Police Officers. Their job is to catch (tag) the Robbers.

All other skaters are Robbers. Once tagged the Robbers must go immediately to jail with their hands in the air.

Robbers who have not been tagged can make a 'jail break' by trying to sneak past the jail guards and free the jailed robbers by tagging them. If a robber is tagged by either a jail guard or a police officer in attempting the jail break, they are now in jail and must await freedom (tag from a free robber).

If the game goes for more than 5' without all the Robbers being caught, stop and change the Police and Jail Guards.

Variation:

To end the game more quickly do not allow jail breaks (although jail breaks makes the game more fun and challenging).

Variation of Game Name or theme:

Same game but the theme changes:

Canadians vs Americans: Canada is being invaded by the United States. Assign border guards, police, and invading Americans.

Space Wars – Earth vs Martians, etc...

Protector

Played in groups of 4. Should be fairly equal size and ability athletes.

Three skaters join hands and form a ring, with the 4th skater – the tagger, outside the ring. One of the 3 skaters is designated 'The Protected One'. It is the job of the other 2 skaters in the ring, the Protectors, to make sure the tagger outside the ring does not touch The Protected One. They do this by spinning the ring so The Protected One is always farthest away from the tagger, and barring the way through the middle with their arms and bodies. The tagger can try to go right, go left, up the middle, switching directions and tactics every few seconds to try to fool the Protectors. Once touched, switch up Protectors, Protected One, and Tagger.

Dodge Ball Games

Equipment needed:

20 nerf balls (try the Dollar Store)

Coloured pinnies or jerseys is a good idea to keep the teams straight (I made my own really cheap!)

Game 1 – a shorter game

2 teams – say red and green

Goal: Timed event, fastest team to eliminate the other team from center circle wins.

Red team starts inside the center hockey circle. Green team takes positions on blue lines and against boards. Give each Green skater a ball or two to start. Have a timer with a stopwatch. When the timer says GO, Green throws balls at Red. Once hit, Red skaters must immediately exit the circle. Time ends when last skater is hit. Switch places and time. Team with the fastest time to eliminate the other team wins.

Game 2 – a little longer game

Same as above but use the whole ice rather than confining to the circle. Designate a spot for eliminated skaters to go to once hit, i.e.: left sideboards.

Coloured pinnies or jerseys is a good idea to keep the teams straight (I made my own really cheap!)

Game 3 – a longer game again

Goal: To send the other team to jail.

Assign one circle as the jail.

Both Red and Green are throwing balls at each other simultaneously. When hit, skaters must go to jail immediately with hands in the air. Skaters of either team can perform a jailbreak by throwing the ball to a teammate in jail. That person must catch the ball in order to be freed. If an opposing player intercepts the ball, that person is freed.

Relay Games

There are so many different types of relay games it is impossible to get them all down here.

Hockey circle relay

Played in the end zone using the hockey circles as the track. I.e.: (o o)

Safety: move the board pads so both corners are covered.

For younger kids, this is a great way to introduce them to relay racing without having to wait so long between exchanges. You can even set out the blocks ½ way around each of the circles to define the track even more.

Variation:

No Skate Relay: As the skaters get older and faster, speed is a concern in the above game. But the game is a blast when you don't allow their skates to leave the ice. They must skull the entire track.

½ lap No Skate Relay: Again great fun for older, faster skaters. Instead of doing a full lap, skaters now just do ½ lap. Great for practicing hard relay pushes.

On Track Relays

You can do:

Normal relay races

No Skate Relays

½ lap relays

Opposite Way relays

Backwards relays – skater coming on track comes out backwards and pushes off Skater on Track's butt

Linked Relays – 2 skaters link arms and skate a lap, then push off simultaneously to two other skaters who are linked. Once the skaters are comfortable with this you can add skaters to the links. Really nuts!

Bucket Relay

Need 2-4 five gallon buckets.

Make 2-4 equal teams. Make sure skaters know what order they are going in.

Skaters #1 and #2 from each team line up at the center red line. Skater #1 sits on the bucket. At the GO, skater #2 pushes skater #1 around the track for one lap. When they cross the blue line, just before one lap mark, skater 1 gets off the bucket, skater 2 gets on, and skater 3 pushes skater 2 for one lap. This continues through the whole line with the first skater pushing the last skater to complete the game.