

# Get Ready For Hockey Tryouts.

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Every year around this time my kids start getting excited about hockey tryouts and it becomes a major topic of conversation in the household. This is typical of many hockey families this time of year. Something my kids have done at home on a regular basis for the past five years is practice on our IcePro synthetic ice surface located in our garage.

We have a 16 foot x 26 foot synthetic rink set up for year round use whenever the kids feel like training, which is usually 3-4 times per week. However with tryouts just around the corner, they are on it at least once a day fine tuning their skills. They find it a great tool to practice tight turns, pivots, quick feet, stick handling, and of course shooting and accuracy.

Our association runs a series of skills stations for the initial few tryout sessions and the results of those sessions are used to sort out the next groupings. Because my kids have always practiced their skills so much at home they usually manage to stay in the top groups which eventually turn into the A, AA, or AAA teams. Also because they are practicing skills ahead of the tryouts with their skates on they go into these sessions feeling confident about their chances. Tryouts for any team sport are stressful enough as it is, and it's nice to see them feeling good about their performance when the time comes.

My oldest is 16 now and he played Midget AAA last season. But he worked very hard to get to that level. Back in the day he played house league in both years as an Atom player. It wasn't really until he began to practice a lot more at home on the synthetic ice that he really came on. In particular his shot improved, and so did his small space skills. My daughter is now 12 and she plays boys hockey and has made AAA and AA teams along the way, competing against the best boys her age. She will be out in the garage again tonight getting ready for her tryouts. She has a series of drills she will practice, and I don't even help her anymore. She'll crank the music up and go about her training.

Before they head out to a tryout session, my kids will jump on the synthetic ice and take 50 shots or so to get "into it". It gives them a certain confidence once they hit the real ice.

As a hockey training tool anytime, synthetic ice at home is hard to beat. As a hockey parent it may be the best investment you ever make in your child's development.