

## Training on Synthetic Ice

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Many parents ask if their kids will get better if they practice on synthetic ice. The quick answer is a resounding "yes!" But even having a synthetic rink or skating pad available to your kids won't guarantee success. Of course they have to want to use it. If you have the type of kid that will take 100 shots a day without anyone telling them to then chances are you will get a lot back from the investment in synthetic ice. I look to my own children as good examples.

My son who is now 16 and playing Midget AAA never once played AAA until he was 15 years old. He was passed over in Atom, Peewee, and Bantam. He was always a great skater but lacked a shot, and wasn't strong enough on the puck and for defense was a little bit on the small side. Through a dedicated daily effort on our home garage synthetic rink his shot improved and so did his puck handling skills to the point where he started to get noticed. His skating got even better - especially his tight turns and explosiveness. My daughter is 11 years old and she has been the one to benefit the most due to her younger age when we built our rink 4 years ago. She plays boys hockey and went from Atom A to Atom AAA and then to Peewee AA in her first year in that division - that's when hitting starts. She is one of the stronger skaters for her age group in our hockey association. She hopes to crack the AAA team again this fall and therefore has been practicing her skills almost everyday - at home - whenever she feels like it. Her current project is her slap shot. This can be the most frustrating skill for many young players to master - and practically non-existent for girls her age.

People wonder what can be accomplished on a small home surface and we tell them "a lot." The only limitation is your imagination (and your budget). There are lots of drills available on the internet and we even produced some of our own. Most hockey dads (or moms) who have played the game or watched a practice can likely think up a lot of drills. Consider where your child is most behind in terms of their skating or their skills, and then develop a program to help them address that. Everyone wants the big shot - but coaches look for a lot more than that. They look for great skaters and skill, and of course team players. If you break each of these down into small bites then you start to come up with some drills.

For example, let's consider skating on a small home surface. You can practice quick explosive starts, tight turns - with and without the puck, footwork (step over's), pivots, stopping and changing direction and so on. There's no end to it really. The more synthetic ice you can afford and have space for the more drills you can dream up. Have your child keep a practice log and show them how to chart their progress. Over time you will see amazing results and their confidence will soar.

As a side note, it is worthwhile to research synthetic ice products and spend the extra money for a higher end product. We hear so many complaints about low grade product either just not working well or literally wearing within a few years. It's just not worth it to spend thousands of dollars on a bad product, it really isn't. The better the product the easier things will go at home for practice, and the greater chance your child will want to continue practicing. Low quality products will turn them off and give them bad skating habits.

Having synthetic ice at home for your kids to use is a fantastic investment that can be very rewarding, fun and keep your kids away from the video games!

## About the Author

For more information on synthetic ice and hockey training products please visit <http://www.IcePro.ca> Tim Oldfield at IcePro offers expert advice and free estimates for your home or commercial rink project - regardless of size or application.