

Skill Circuits – a fun and productive way to practice

Maximize ice time. Challenge your players. Make it fun. Develop skills. Keep your players moving. Conditioning. Work on weaknesses. Get your assistants involved. All are considerations in planning a practice for every coach at every level of the game.

On-ice skill circuits are an easy way you can achieve all of the above in your practices. They can be designed for any level, for any skills and for as much ice as you have (half-ice or full). All it takes is a little thought and creativity. What are the individual skating and puck skills that your players need to work on?

The following is a sample on-ice skill circuit that can be used – but keep in mind that it is as flexible as your creativity allows it to be. It may take some preparation time to implement it at first, it does require some set-up time in terms of equipment, and it does require that your players have the ability to pay attention to direction and watch what the group ahead of them is doing.

There are literally hundreds of different skills that can be worked on in a small area. It can be used on a regular basis, maybe once a month to add a change of pace to your practices.

Before practice:

- Divide your players into pairs (try to pair up players of similar skill level – you may be able to alter certain drills to address weaknesses of different levels)
- Set up your stations and assign a pair to each station
- Assign 2-3 stations for each assistant coach to set up and oversee during the training
- You might want to go as far as naming each station, and taping a sheet with the name of each station and the drill outline on the glass at that area as a reference for the players and assistant coaches (at least until they become familiar with the format).

During the circuit:

- One player from each pair performs the skill at each station while the other rests
- Each repetition lasts 40 seconds. Players begin on the whistle and end on the next whistle, which starts their partner.
- Players repeat the skill for the entire 40 seconds without stopping.
- Have each player do each skill station twice (for those that apply – once each way – ie. first time clock-wise, second time counter clock-wise) before moving to the next station
- Allow approximately 15-30 seconds for the players to move to the next station before you blow the whistle to begin

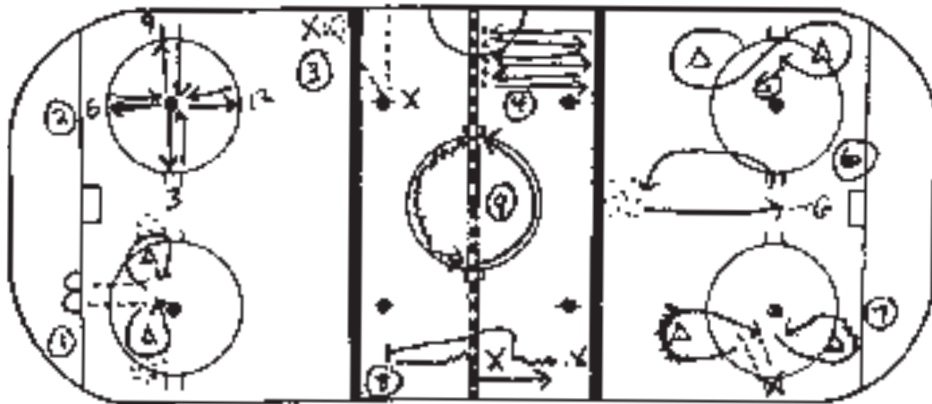
- Alert the first player in each station to “watch the next station” and move into position to begin right away once you announce to move to the next station
- Switch goalies between their stations as needed

Skill Stations

1. Figure 8 Shooting – Set up two cones in front of the net about 8 feet apart with pucks spread out on the outside of the cones. The player picks up a puck while cutting around the cone and shoots from the middle (forehand), then picks up the puck from the other side and shoots from the middle (backhand). Vary shots allowed by age of players.
2. Quick Foot Clock – Player begins on the face-off dot as shown and always faces the same direction. He begins by doing running crossovers to his right to the hash mark (3 o'clock), and back to the dot, forward to the top of the circle (12 o'clock) and back to the dot, running crossovers to the hash mark (9 o'clock) and back, backward to the bottom of the circle (6 o'clock) and back – always stopping on each change of direction and at the face-off dot.
3. Quick Release Shooting – The shooter positions himself about 12-15 feet away from the boards with his partner, the passer, and several pucks near the boards. The passer feeds soft passes to a spot where the shooter works on releasing the quickest, hardest, most accurate shot he can using a wrist shot or snap shot.
4. Puck Shuttle – Stops n' Starts – Line up five pucks on the red line with the first skater beginning at the blue line. The player skates to the red line, stops, picks up a puck and brings it back to the blue line, stops, leaves the puck at the blue line and repeats the drill. Players should always be facing the boards when stopping and starting,

emphasizing good stops while controlling the puck and good quick crossover starts.

5. Tight Turn Puck Control – Set up two cones about 12-15 feet apart. Players skate in a figure 8 around the cones while controlling the puck, emphasizing turning sharply with good puck control, and maintaining their speed.
6. Breakaway – Position several pucks at the blue line. Players will repeat breakaways continuously, taking a puck to the net, deking or shooting, then retreating to the blue line to pick up the next puck. Emphasis should be on moving with speed to the net and goalies have a chance to work on movement.
7. Figure 8 Passing – Position two cones 12-15 feet apart with a player halfway between them along the boards as shown. One player skates a figure 8 through the cones pivoting from forward to backward and backward to forward, always facing his partner. As he gets to the middle of the cones, he receives a pass from his partner, and immediately passes it back, before moving around the next cone.
8. Bust a Move – One player stands stationary as shown as the “defender” as shown with his stick turned upside down. The puck carrier starts about 10 feet in front of the defender and skates toward him, making a good move with the puck to get it around the defender and stops about 10 feet on the other side. Emphasis should be on good fakes and quick moves with the puck. Defender should try to poke check with the butt end of the stick.
9. Crossover/Crossunder – Players skate the center ice circle, always facing the same direction, crossing over while moving forward, transitioning at the red line and crossing under backward on the other side. First set should be clockwise, the second counter clockwise. Can be done with or without a puck.



CIRCUIT TRAINING