



BUDGETING *Tips*

All youth sports require some financial investment, and costs to participate in hockey can be substantially reduced with planning and common sense. Additionally, both USA Hockey and many local associations offer a number of options to help make hockey a game everyone can play and enjoy.

ABOVE ALL, don't buy into the myth that only kids from wealthy families can excel in hockey. Many of the game's greatest players came from modest financial backgrounds.

YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION is the first place you should turn if you have questions or concerns. Local hockey associations have a wealth of knowledge, experience and connections that can help you minimize costs. Additionally, a high-quality youth hockey association will also make efficient use of ice time by putting multiple teams on the ice for practice sessions,

reducing costs while also increasing skill development opportunities.

REMEMBER, used or hand-me-down equipment can be a great way to reduce costs, especially at the younger ages. Young children don't put as much wear-and-tear on equipment; its effectiveness usually far exceeds one or two players' use. Just be sure to inspect it carefully to ensure that all used items are still safe and fit properly. Resist the temptation to put your kids in oversized equipment. It will hurt their performance, making it difficult for them to perform and have fun.

COMPARISON SHOP. There are a myriad of online and local outlets offering new and used hockey equipment. Look for the best deals.

REMEMBER that hockey equipment can be a great birthday or holiday gift.

PRO TIP:

NEITHER THE SKATES NOR THE STICK MAKE THE PLAYER, ESPECIALLY AT YOUNGER AGES, but proper fit matters. Put your children in equipment that is safe, comfortable and adequate, but resist the temptation to outfit them lavishly. If you have questions regarding when a big-ticket splurge might be appropriate, ask your association or coaches. Regarding sticks, remember that proper stick length is crucial. While there is a range, a good rule of thumb is that an upright stick with the toe of the blade on the ground shouldn't rise above the player's eyes if standing in shoes. In skates, an upright stick with the toe on the ice shouldn't rise much above the chin or be much below the collar bone.

Given the choice, most kids who are truly passionate about playing the game would prefer foregoing other types of gifts if it meant they could continue playing hockey.

BE PROACTIVE. Ask your local associations to explain what is included in exchange for your registration fees. Ask how the money is allocated toward ice time, administration, officials and travel. Also make sure these topics are covered during preliminary parent meetings so you clearly understand your financial commitment for the season.

AVOID SPENDING money on impulse purchases at concession stands and during road trips. Pack lunches. Stay in hotels with complimentary breakfasts. Reduce travel. Frequently traveling to far-flung tournaments isn't a necessary component of skill development. Development happens at your local rink. Road trips can be fun, but they aren't where you get the most bang for your hockey buck.



Try Hockey For Free

While you're already part of the sport, if you have friends whose children would like to try youth hockey, USA Hockey hosts Try Hockey For Free events each year that give children who haven't had that opportunity to play hockey a chance to try it for free.

TRYHOCKEYFORFREE.COM