

10 Mid-Summer Development "Areas"

Looking for new ways to stay active and have fun this summer? It's important for hockey families to take a break from the rink for a month or two, so we came up with some off-ice "drills" for you to try out this summer.

Granted, some of these are not *drills* per se, but hockey families should take advantage of the offseason by thinking outside the box and looking for ways to enjoy the warm summer weather. Remember, these are options and certainly not meant to take you away from soccer, baseball, golf and other traditional sports that will all help you become a better overall athlete. In general, I think hockey players prefer anything "outside" since you spend all winter freezing on the ice.

Here are 10 non-traditional activities that will improve your child's athleticism while they recharge their hockey batteries for next year.

Waterskiing. Take advantage of the Land of 10,000 Lakes by waterskiing this offseason. Waterskiing may appear to primarily work out your lower body, but it's definitely a full-body workout. You'll strengthen your shoulders, arms, wrists and hands from the boat pulling you. Your core and lower body are constantly used to maintain balance and agility, which will translate to being stronger on your skates. Wakeboarding works as well. It is also mentally challenging, whether you're a beginner or a veteran, as it requires constant focus. Don't forget the other health benefits associated with waterskiing, including sunshine and fresh air.

Ultimate Frisbee. Grab a Frisbee, some friends and head to the park or local soccer and football fields. Ultimate Frisbee is a fast-growing sport that will leave kids drenched in sweat, gasping for air and grinning from ear to ear. Speed, quickness, footwork and stamina will be tested. Anticipation skills are needed on offense and defense. Kids must adjust their bodies and think on the fly when the Frisbee is in the air as it changes directions quickly and easily.

Mountain Biking. It's time for an adventure. Mountain biking provides a refreshing change of scenery. Speed, strength, stability and stamina will be tested, all while providing an adrenaline-pumping outdoor experience. The built-up stamina will pay off when you're in shape for the beginning of the season and fresh at the end of games. Check out your local trails, parks and forests – or pack up the bikes and go on a road trip with friends to a spot you read about.

Racquetball. In racquetball, the ball comes at you at every possible angle. It requires your brain and muscles to react quickly. Footwork and quickness are essential to catching up with the ball, and hand-eye coordination is needed to execute. Racquetball is a great overall, high-tempo workout that will improve multiple fitness capacities for people of all ages. Squash and handball are similar alternatives to racquetball. Tennis is the more popular and traditional option.

Hacky Sack/Footbag. This low-cost activity is great for coordination. It forces you to react quickly and adjust your body to the path of the bag. Constant movement creates a workout for the entire body. You can play by yourself or with a group of friends. Compete against yourself or with others to see how long you can keep it in the air. Almost every NHL team has players that do this with a soccer ball prior to a game. It gets their feet moving and helps them get focused.

Gymnastics/Tumbling. Flexibility, balance and agility are paramount in hockey. Hone those skills with gymnastics and tumbling. Start with the basics and work your way up. If boys are hesitant to try it, just remember many elite NHL players participated in tumbling and gymnastics growing up, including Alex Ovechkin. Tumbling is a common component of young athlete development in Europe and Russia.

Standup Paddleboarding. Standup paddleboarding is becoming very popular – and it's one of Cunningham's favorite activities. "I've done it a few times. It's awesome – and a killer workout," said Cunningham. "It's great for your core, leg strength, balance, cardio, etc. If I ever move back to Minnesota, I'll be on a board on a lake as much as possible."

Yoga. Yoga may no longer be considered "obscure" or "unusual," but some hockey players may still be hesitant to grab a mat. It's time to give it a shot. High-level hockey players like the Minnesota Wild's Charlie Coyle are [seeing the benefits](#). More and more adult hockey players are [delving into the workout](#) for flexibility, injury prevention, strength and piece of mind. Sign up for a class or watch some videos at home. Try it with your friends or family.

Water Polo. It's kind of like hockey, except the water isn't frozen. During water polo, the players cannot touch the bottom or the sides of the pool. This forces the body to constantly stay in motion, which is great for endurance. Muscle strength is required to stay above water, move quickly and change directions. Being in the water also lessens the strain on your joints and muscles. Grab your friends and try it. The social and teamwork aspects can be equally as beneficial.

Floorball. Hockey players love floorball, a sport growing in popularity in the [U.S. Floorball enhances stickhandling, passing and shooting skills](#) for hockey players. Many Europeans grew up playing floorball to help with skill development. It's a fun sport that fosters creativity and many of the concepts translate very well to hockey.

There are also hundreds of backyard and playground games that kids can play. Hopscotch, four square, group jump rope, and tag are just a few fun activities that kids love to play that offer a surprising number of training benefits. Add in a sprinkler, pool or lake on the hottest days and your kids are in for a great summer!

Remember, mid-summer should be spent away from the rink. Recharge and take a break from the sport we love. Be safe, stay active and have fun.