



How To Get The Most Out of Your Camp Experience

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The hockey camp season has arrived.

You've spent a lot of time deciding which camp is best for your daughter.

You are both happy with your choice. Your most important questions have been answered and she is getting more and more excited as the camp gets closer.

You have invested a lot of time and money in this camp and you want to be sure that your daughter gets the most of out her experience.

In this report, I will help you get the most out of your hockey camp experience by showing you exactly how to:

- Determine which of the 2 types of camp you are attending.
- Stand out no matter what kind of camp you are at.
- Get better as camp goes on by using 2 simple strategies.

Hockey camp is a great chance to re-unite with old friends and make new ones. It is also a great opportunity to learn new skills and perfect old ones.

So...Let's get started on you having your best camp ever.

Two Types of Camps, Two Unique Approaches

Before I can start giving you advice on how to get the most out of your summer camp experience, let's determine which type of camp you are attending.

There are 2 distinct types of hockey camps that each require their own unique approach. These two camps can be very different in terms of schedule, intensity and length and they definitely require a very different mindset from the players who are participating.

PRACTICE: The Training Camp

This name is a little bit misleading. I am NOT talking about the training camps that you have with your team right before the start of the season.

The type of camp that I am referring to is the one that is traditionally thought of as a skill-based summer camp. This is your typical week-long camp where players work on various aspects of their game under the guidance of an instructor.

These camps are less about performance and more about practice. They give players a terrific opportunity to work on their weaknesses in an environment where they are being taught by qualified professionals and aren't being judged by their teammates and evaluated by their coaches. The two main goals for this type of camp are: to learn and have fun (although not necessarily in that order).

While every young player wants to look good in front of their peers, these camps are a terrific opportunity to try new things and get outside of your comfort zone. You might make mistakes in the short-term, but learning from those mistakes is what will make you a better player in the long run.

PERFORMANCE: The Tryout Camp

Again, this name may be a little misleading. I am NOT talking about the tryout camps that you might attend at the end of the season or end of the summer where the coaches pick the team for next year.

The tryout camps we are talking about here are a different kind of selection camp, where players are looking to impress scouts and coaches who may be selecting a regional, provincial or national all-star team. These camps are usually by invitation only or at least require a player to go through an application process in order to be selected.

Unlike the training camp described above, these camps are all about performance. While players will certainly be able to learn a lot while being surrounded by talented players and knowledgeable coaches, players must capitalize on their opportunity to stand out and separate themselves from the crowd at these camps.

How to Stand Out At Camp

The tryout camp is where players must showcase their strengths. If you are a natural goal scorer, then you must show that at camp. If you are a great two-way centre, then you should be the best back-checker on the ice. If you are a solid stay-at-home defenseman, then you had better be making great breakout passes all week.

The problem that most young players run into at high-performance camps is that they get so wrapped up in worrying about their weaknesses, that they forget to showcase their strengths.

The bad news is that if you have a glaring weakness, the evaluators are going to be able to find it. You can't hide a weak wrist shot or poor passing skills for long.

But, the good news is...

Every player who ever played the game has weaknesses!!! Not everyone is a natural goal scorer, a solid two-way player or great at controlling the breakout. And while every coach would love to have a team full of players who could execute every skill and strategy perfectly, they also know that it is a completely unrealistic vision for a team.

Be the best on the ice at whatever it is that you do best.

And if the coach is looking for someone who has that strength (and trust me they are), then you are going to be the one they remember. Instead of comparing yourself to everyone else on the ice on every skill imaginable, focus on what you do best - and do it the best to of your ability.

Make them notice you for your strengths and not for your short-comings.

Whether you are attending a training or tryout camp (or both) this summer, keep these keys in mind:

Training Camp: Work on your Weaknesses

Tryout Camp: Show off your Strengths

2 Strategies to Get Better as Camp Continues

You've been excited about going to camp for months. You show up on the first day full of energy and enthusiasm.

Here's what a typical Day 1 has in store for players:

- Two, four (and sometimes six!) hours on the ice
- A few hours of off-ice activities

By the time camp rolls around, most players haven't been on the ice for two or three months. Jumping into 6 or more hours of high-intensity activity after that long of a layoff is a recipe for tightness, soreness and fatigue.

In every hockey school I have ever attended (as either a player or coach), I see the same pattern. Everyone is full of energy going into Day One, they are a little tired by the time Day Two rolls around, and by Day Three, almost everyone is a walking zombie.

It is pretty hard to learn and have fun when you can barely keep your eyes open and your legs feel like they each weigh 1000 pounds.

Here are 2 simple strategies that you can use during camp to make sure that you feel your best for each day and you can get the most out of each on-ice session.

1) DRINK!

You should have a full water bottle glued to you at all times over the course of the camp.

Players should drink at least 2 liters (8 cups) of water per day.

If that seems like a lot, think about how much activity players are doing over the course of the day. Not only are they skating or running around for upwards of 6 hours, but they are probably running around outside in the heat for a few of those hours.

While it is true that young athletes do not sweat as much as adults and don't lose as much water in that way, they still need to focus on staying hydrated. Because they don't sweat as much, their body temperature tends to rise more quickly than in adults. Maintaining proper levels of hydration will help to lower body temperature and keep them performing at their best.

As soon as you are thirsty, you are dehydrated. Once you are dehydrated, your mind loses the ability to focus and your muscles can't work their best. It is amazing what drinking a few cups of water can do for your energy when you are feeling tired. In fact, staying hydrated is probably the simplest thing you can do at any hockey camp to ensure that you feel and perform your best.

2) STRETCH!

Most young players do not stretch enough in the season and that pattern certainly continues during hockey camps. Ideally, a proper stretching session would be incorporated into the end of each day of camp - but this is rarely the case.

After the first day of camp, players usually start to feel tightness and soreness in the “hockey” muscles. Players might misinterpret tightness in the groin or hip flexors as a muscle pull, where in the majority of cases, the skating muscles are just fatigued after a day of hard work.

Players must do themselves a favor and take the time to stretch their “hockey” muscles after each day of camp. The 5 muscle groups players should focus on stretching are:

Hip Flexors • Groin • Quadriceps • Glutes • Hamstrings

Players should hold each stretch for 1 minute. If the stretch is one-sided, players must hold the stretch for 1 minute on each side.

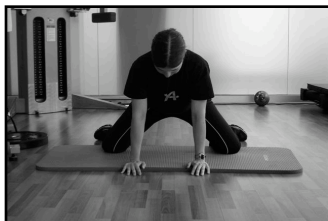
Taking just 10 minutes to focus on stretching 5 key muscle groups after the end of a long day will go a long way towards alleviating tightness and making sure that you feel your best when heading out on the ice the next morning.



Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch

Purpose: Elongate the hip flexors - tightness in these muscles pulls on the bones & discs of the lower back causing back pain.

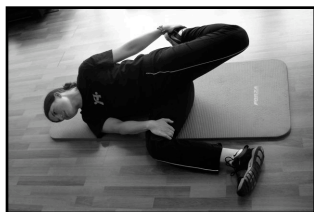
Start out in a kneeling position with both knees at a 90 degree angle. Pull your arms straight up overhead, squeezing your biceps by your ears. Lean your weight forward slightly on your front leg and pull your hands up towards the ceiling to increase the stretch through the front of the back leg. Don't lean back - instead thinking about making yourself as tall as possible. Hold for 1 minute on each side.



Knees Wide Groin Stretch

Purpose: Elongate the hip adductors (groin)

Start out on your hands and knees. Slowly move your knees as wide apart as possible while keeping your toes pointing out to the side. Use your hands to support yourself in this position and push your body back towards your feet slightly to increase the stretch. If this bothers your knees, bring your feet closer together. Hold for 1 minute.



Side Lying Quadriceps Stretch

Purpose: Elongate the quadriceps and hip flexors

Start lying on your side and grab on underneath the knee of the leg that is closest to the floor. Reach back and grab the shin or foot of the top leg and pull your heel towards your buttocks. Make sure that you stay on your side and aren't pulling yourself over onto your back. To increase the stretch, squeeze the glute (butt) of your top leg and push your hips forward slightly. Hold for 1 minute each side.



Kneeling Figure 4 Glutes Stretch

Purpose: Elongate the external rotators of the hip (glutes)

Start out in a kneeling position and use your hand to pull one leg into the bent position with the outside of your knee touching the floor. Straighten out your back leg behind you. If you are unable to position your front leg at 90 degrees, you can move your front heel closer to your hips. Make sure you don't roll onto the side of the front leg and your hips are even relative to the floor. Hold for 1 minute on each side.



Lying Bent Leg Hamstring Stretch

Purpose: Elongate the hamstrings

Lie on your back with one knee bent with the floor flat on the floor and the other leg extended up towards the ceiling. Grasp the back of the knee/calf/ankle of the extended leg and pull it in towards your chest without letting the leg bend. Hold for 1 minute on each side.

You and your daughter are well on your way to having your best camp ever. Now all that is left is to have fun (and learn something).

Your player development coach,

Kim

Kim McCullough, YCS, M.Sc., is a highly-sought after expert in the development of aspiring female hockey players and has played at the highest levels of the women's hockey for over 10 years.

Kim's **website** (<http://www.totalfemalehockey.com>) and **blog** (<http://www.totalfemalehockey.blogspot.com>) give the coaches and parents of aspiring female players access to the most up-to-date programs, articles and advice on how to develop the next great female hockey player.

Visit www.totalfemalehockey.com to learn how you can start taking your game to a whole new level of performance TODAY!