



U15 NON-CHECKING / BODY CONTACT ONLY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The FAQ document has been created to assist Minor Hockey Associations in the planning and implementation of non-checking/ body contact only hockey (Non-Checking) at the Tiers 4-6 categories of the U15 division. Hockey Alberta is also drafting a Parent Resource Document around Checking Education that will be made available.

1. What division and categories are changing?

Tiers 4-6 in the U15 division are affected by this change and are now non-checking tiers of hockey. The U15 division will look as follows for the 2020-2021 season:

- U15 AAA, U15AA, U15 Tiers 1-3 – Body Checking
- U15 Tiers 4-6 – Non-Checking

2. What Leagues are implementing this change?

Minor Hockey Associations that participate in the following Leagues will be affected by this change:

- Central Alberta Hockey League (CAHL)
- Northern Alberta Interlock (NAI)
- North Eastern Alberta Hockey League (NEAHL)
- All Peace Hockey League (APHL)
- Edmonton Federation Hockey League (EFHL)
- Hockey Calgary

3. What are the expected benefits of making this decision?

There are two significant benefits expected with non-checking options at U15:

- Increased safety for our participants, and
- More options for our participants to continue playing hockey, as associations that have implemented non-checking options have generally seen growth at the U15 division.

Hockey Calgary and the EFHL have demonstrated both of these benefits since implementing non-checking hockey.

From a safety perspective, both organizations have seen major reductions in the penalties that would be deemed as a “high risk for injury”. For instance, the following chart highlights the EFHL over the past two seasons:

	2018-2019		2019-2020	
	Tiers 1 – 3	Tiers 4 – 6	Tiers 1 – 3	Tiers 4 - 6
Charging	53	9	72	5
Checking from Behind	47	23	64	15
Elbow	17	23	51	11
Head Contact	714	264	770	212
Boarding	248	54	286	58

*Numbers include Minor, Double Minor, Major & Match penalties.

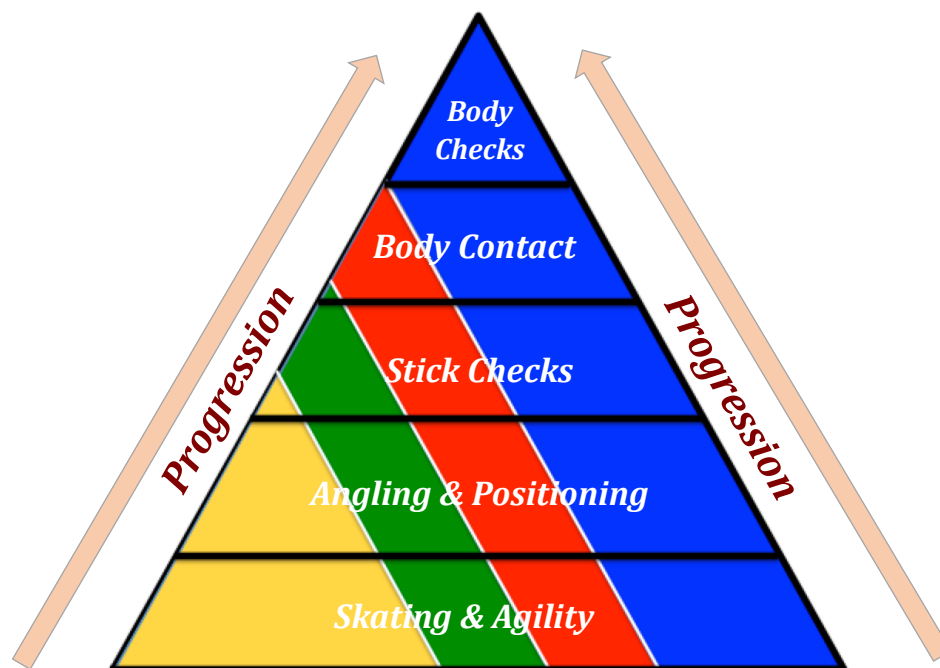
As well, both organizations have seen major benefits when it comes to player retention and the number of teams. The EFHL has seen an increase of 32 teams at their U15 division since implementing non-checking tiers in the 2016-2017 season. Of these 32 teams, 24 come from associations that have participated in the EFHL since the 2016-2017 season, which speaks to those associations retaining and growing their U15 player registration, which has allowed them to put more teams on the ice.

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4. Why was the decision made to implement non-checking starting at Tier 4?

First, aligning leagues and non-checking hockey across the province was essential. EFHL and Hockey Calgary have been operating non-checking hockey, starting at the Tier 4 category, for several seasons, and have seen growth at these categories of hockey. To align with these two leagues, the Minor Leagues Committee unanimously supported the implementation starting at Tier 4.

Second, from a player development, progression and safety standpoint, there are four (4) essential skills that will allow players to properly give and receive a body check. Those four skills are skating and agility; angling and positioning; stick checks; and body contact. Players who are limited in these four (4) essential skills do increase the risk of injury to themselves or other players should they be participating in body checking hockey. This progression is highlighted in the below diagram:



5. Is 'Body Contact' being eliminated as part of this change?

No, 'body contact' will not be eliminated, nor can it be eliminated. Body contact does and continues to play a crucial role in the game at all divisions.

6. What is the difference between Body Checking and Body Contact?

Body Checking is "an attempt by a player to gain an advantage on the opponent with the use of the body. Body checking results when two opposing players collide while skating in opposite directions or when positioning and angling allow the checker to use the force of the body to gain the advantage."

Body Contact is "incidental contact of two opposing players in pursuit of the puck or position on the ice in the same direction. Body contact occurs as a result of movement by the offensive player."

Below are two videos that will help educate your association and membership on the differences:

Body Checking: <https://youtu.be/49eOGJzPzs8>

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Body Contact: <https://youtu.be/byVpydXxMV8>

7. Should coaches of non-checking teams be teaching their players the skill of body checking?

Yes, Hockey Alberta strongly recommends that coaches continue to teach the skills of properly giving and receiving a body check. By teaching these skills, players will be able to affiliate to teams playing with body checking and progress into playing with body checking in future seasons.

Minor Hockey Associations are encouraged to develop a coaching plan with their U13 and U15 coaches to ensure these skills are being taught on a regular basis.

8. Will players from non-checking teams be eligible to affiliate to 'body checking' teams?

Yes, players from non-checking teams will be eligible to affiliate to teams playing with body checking rules, should that player agree to be affiliated as such. Hockey Alberta's Affiliation Regulations will apply to the affiliation of all players.

9. As an association with one (1) team at the U15 division, my association will be able to declare to our League that we are either 'body checking' or 'non-checking'?

Yes, on a year-by-year basis, associations with only one (1) U15 team will be given the one-time declaration to choose either 'body checking' or 'non-checking' by their League Team Declaration deadline. Hockey Alberta strongly recommends that associations have an idea of the team's competitiveness prior to League Tiering to ensure they are declaring based on the teams competitiveness.

For those associations who declare their one (1) team as 'body checking', but due to their competitiveness in the League Tiering Process wish to move to the 'non-checking' tiers of hockey (4-6), will be given the opportunity to move prior to the end of their League Tiering Process; or by their League's re-tiering deadline.

However, those associations who declare their one (1) team as 'non-body checking' will not be given the opportunity to move up to 'body checking' / Tier 3 or higher.

10. As an association, should I ask players if they would like to participate in 'non-checking' hockey?

Yes, Hockey Alberta strongly recommends at the time of player registration, that an option is provided for players to indicate if they would like to participate in 'body checking' or 'non-checking' hockey. This will allow associations to determine their numbers for either option and to start planning for League play accordingly.

Our recommendation is that a check box is added on the association's individual player registration form to gather this information.

11. As an association with one (1) team at the U15 division, what should I do if half the players select 'body checking' and the other half select 'non-checking'?

Hockey Alberta strongly encourages that associations, within a close proximity to each other, work together to form two (2) or more teams. By working together, associations can have one (1) team



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declared as 'body checking' and the other team declared as 'non-checking' as per the Alberta One Standardized Tiering Grid.

12. As an association with one (1) team at the U15 division, what should I do if there are a one or two players of a higher skill, but our team has declared as 'non-checking'?

Hockey Alberta strongly encourages that associations, within a close proximity to each other, work together to form two (2) or more teams, so that these players might be able to access a higher tier with 'body checking'.

With that said, all players at the U15 division, regardless of their resident Minor Hockey Association, are guaranteed the opportunity of a tryout with their resident U15 AAA and U15 AA teams. This opportunity affords all players the ability to access a higher level of hockey at the U15 division with body checking.

13. As an association with one (1) or two (2) teams at the U15 division, do we have to allow players the opportunity to play 'body checking' even though they have been placed on a 'non-checking' team?

All players at the U15 division, regardless of their resident Minor Hockey Association, are guaranteed the opportunity of a tryout with their resident U15 AAA and U15 AA teams. This is the opportunity afforded to players to access 'body checking' hockey, as the players resident Minor Hockey Association must allow these tryouts to be accessible.

Nonetheless, Hockey Alberta would encourage associations to allow players who would like to play 'body checking' to be granted the ability to do so, if either their skills warrant the movement or if it doesn't jeopardize the associations ability to ice a team at the U15 division.

Movement between associations would take place using Hockey Alberta's Minor Player Movement Form.

14. As an association with one (1) team, if our team has declared as 'body checking', but we have players that want to play 'non-checking', do we have to allow them the ability to access 'non-checking'?

Yes, as this speaks to a safety component of the game. Players who would like to play 'non-checking' hockey have to be given the opportunity to access this option and cannot be forced to play 'body checking' hockey.

15. Will Hockey Alberta be operating a Provincial Championship at the U15 Tier 4 Non-Checking Category?

Yes, Hockey Alberta has the full intention of operating the very first 'non-checking' Provincial Championship at the U15 Tier 4 category for the 2020-2021 season. This Provincial Championship will be comprised of the U15 Tier 4 League Champions, as part of the Alberta One Provincial Championship Trial Project.



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16. Will Hockey Alberta be looking at changing the names of the categories as part of this implementation of ‘non-checking’ hockey?

For the 2020-2021 season, Hockey Alberta and the Minor Leagues will be keeping the current Tier 1 – 6 naming of categories for the ease of transition and to avoid any confusion amongst the hockey community.

However, we anticipate the category names to be changed in future seasons to reflect the following:

2020-2021 Season		2021-2022 season & beyond	
Body Checking	Non-Checking	Body Checking	Non-Checking
Tiers 1 – 3	Tiers 4 - 6	Tiers 1 – 3 Body Checking	Tiers 1 – 3 Non-Checking

17. From an Officiating Standpoint, how will officials know if a game is ‘body-checking’ or ‘non-checking’?

Hockey Alberta will be including this information in all Officials Clinic, so that the officials are equipped to officiate both ‘body checking and ‘non-checking’ hockey at the U15 division.

To help aid the officials, Hockey Alberta will require that for U15 ‘non-checking’ game, the home team will be responsible for indicating on the game sheet prior to the start of the game that ‘non-checking’ rules will apply. This can be done by writing “U15 Tier (Insert Number) Non-Checking Game”. Associations are strongly encouraged to ensure their Coaches & Managers know that this information must be included on game sheets going forward.

18. Will the implementation of ‘non-checking’ at the U15 division lead to further implementation at the U18 division in the future?

Yes, the plan would be to further implement ‘non-checking’ options at the U18 division in two seasons time, the 2022-2023 season.

19. Will there be the opportunity for changes to be made after the first season on province wide ‘non-checking’ hockey?

Yes, Hockey Alberta and the Minor Leagues Committee will be reviewing the first season and soliciting member feedback to see if any changes might be needed, including where the non-checking line is placed.