

Walkerton Minor Hockey - Playing Up Policy – U7/U8 to U9

Applies to: U7 and U8 players requesting to play up into the Association's U9 program.

Effective Date: *[Jan 31st, 2026]*

1. Purpose

This policy ensures that U7 and U8 players only move up to U9 in situations where it is **safe, developmentally appropriate**, and in the **best interest of the player**. Playing up is **rare** and must follow a clear process.

2. Guiding Principles

- **Safety first:** The player must be physically and emotionally ready for U9 full-ice hockey.
- **Development comes first:** Playing up must clearly benefit the player more than staying in U7/U8.
- **Exceptions only:** Playing up is not routine and should occur only when the player is well above their current age level.
- **Team impact considered:** The move must not negatively affect teams in either age group.

3. Eligibility Requirements

A U7 or U8 player may be considered for playing up to U9 if all the following are met:

1. Registered with the Association and in good standing.
2. Current coach confirms the player is consistently performing at the top level of their age group.
3. The player demonstrates maturity, focus, and readiness to handle full-ice play.
4. A clear developmental benefit exists.
5. No U9-aged player loses a roster spot because of the move.

4. Evaluation Process

1. **Parent Request:** A written request is submitted to the Vice President.
2. **Coach Feedback:** The current coach provides input on skill, effort, attitude, and maturity.
3. **U9-Level Assessment:** The player participates in a U9-level evaluation skate with qualified assessors.
4. **Safety Review:** Assessors evaluate physical readiness, skating ability, and ability to safely handle U9 gameplay.
5. **U9 Coach Input:** The U9 coach assesses team fit and potential impact.
6. **Decision:** Vice President reviews all information and approves or declines.

5. Conditions & Limitations

- Playing up is **not guaranteed**.
- Approval may be **revoked** if safety concerns arise at any point.
- Any AP (Affiliate Player) use must follow WOAA rules.

6. Appeals

Parents may submit a written appeal within **7 days** of the decision.

A three-person panel not involved in the original decision will review and issue a final ruling.

7. Roles & Responsibilities

- **Parents:** Submit the request and support development-focused decisions.
- **Coaches:** Provide honest, objective feedback and prioritize safety.
- **Evaluators:** Conduct fair, unbiased assessments of readiness.
- **Vice President:** Makes the final decision based on evidence.