

Making the most out of tournament weekends



Hockey season is back in full swing after Covid-19 -related restrictions closed arenas a number of times during the past two years. The continuation of regular league play also signals the return of one of the most cherished traditions in the world of [minor hockey – tournaments](#).

Whether games are played close to home or hours away, tournaments are a great way to blend competition and social activity for both players and their families – and as far as we’re concerned, dedicating an entire weekend to hockey is a Canadian right of passage. For those who’ve missed out on travel, a tournament weekend away could be just what the doctor ordered. But before you grab your large double-double and hit the road, here are a few considerations to ensure you’re making the most of your tournament weekend.

- First and foremost, **it’s all about the players**. Memories of competing in tournaments alongside friends and teammates often stay with children and teenagers, no matter how they place. To show support, bring a positive attitude to the arena. Be excited and encouraging – it goes a long way.
- **Make a packing list** and check it twice. Nothing is worse than trucking your family and all your gear to an out-of-town tournament only to realize you’ve forgotten a piece of equipment minutes before game time. Making a packing list and taking the time to check it will avoid the stress of having to borrow or buy the equipment or having your child sit out.
- **Plan out a rough itinerary** prior to the tournament. Whether you’re travelling or hosting, find out when games are scheduled, (or could be scheduled), when you’ll have meals and when you’ll have free time. Since game times likely depend on the outcome of previous games, it’s best to pre-plan a few different scenarios.
- **The players will want to have fun off the ice, too**. Collaborate with coaches and other parents to check out nearby activities that won’t tire the players out in between games. It could be as simple as visiting a nearby park, playing mini-golf or bowling. If you’re travelling, your child will likely be excited to spend time away from home with friends, so don’t be surprised if they’re more interested in exploring the arena or hotel as a group instead of hanging with Mom and Dad.

- **Don't forget a team meal.** Whether it's potluck style or at a nearby restaurant, enjoying a meal together is a great way for players to spend their "off" time together. It also can give parents a chance to mingle. If you have a restaurant in mind, make sure to call ahead to ensure they can handle the crowd.
- **Block out some family time,** if your schedule allows. When travelling, a tournament weekend is a great excuse to head to a nearby attraction and log some quality time with the loved ones you came with. This could even mean spending some quiet time in a hotel room to recharge in between games or other activities.
- It's best to **stick to regular bedtimes** to avoid, groggy or grumpy players at game time. Tournaments are special for players and often excitement or pre-game jitters can cause problems when it's time to sleep. Still, children and teenagers alike will need their energy when the puck drops.
- Similarly, make sure you **have access to healthier food choices.** A tournament is a fun weekend away, however, it's not the best time to overindulge in junk food and treats. These competitions have players on the ice multiple times each day, exerting more energy than their likely used to. When mixed with poor food choices it could lead to stomach trouble.

As Covid-19 restrictions continue to lift across the province, check to make sure you're prepared to follow appropriate protocols in arenas, restaurants and hotels. By respecting the rules both on and off the ice we can all help to ensure arenas stay open for good.

Best of luck to all our teams preparing to compete in the final tournaments of the season. Game on!