

Minor hockey player tips: Stay engaged while on the bench

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While there are only five skaters and goalie on the ice at a time during a hockey game, everyone takes a turn in contributing to a team's success.

The Ontario Minor Hockey Association is offering some advice to minor hockey players on how to stay engaged and support your team when it's not your turn on the ice:

? Always be ready ? When it's your turn to hit the ice, make sure you are prepared. Stay focused on the flow of the game and be ready for instructions from your coach. You should know what you are supposed to be doing before you hop over the boards and hit the ice.

? Encourage your teammates ? While your teammates are on the ice you should be encouraging them from the bench. A fist bump or a pat on the back after a hard-working shift are easy gestures to show your teammates that you appreciate their effort.

? Keep your ears open ? Pay attention to what your coaches are saying. They could be sharing important messages about strategy, line changes, or what's happening on the ice. Communicate with your coaches if you pick up on a trend from the opposing team.

? Study the flow of the game ? When you're on the bench you should still be paying attention to what's happening on the ice. Watching the game from outside of the action can be a great learning tool and you can see the other team's tendencies that you may not have otherwise noticed.

? Speak up and be an effective communicator ? Talk to your line mates after your shift and go over what went well and what you can improve on together. Keep the talking to game-related topics and save non-game chatter for the locker room.

? Keep the bench organized ? Put water bottles back in their proper place. Don't leave a mess on the bench. Be aware of your surroundings and remember there are coaches behind you.

? By remembering these tips, you will stay engaged with your team and game on the ice and you will contribute to your team's success.