CONSIDERING PRO HOCKEY?

Off-Ice Checklist for Canadian Players

For players and families evaluating junior, college, and professional pathways, this tool focuses on off-ice realities, not performance or scouting.

AGES 15–16
AWARENESS & PROTECTION

Objective: *Learn the system. Avoid irreversible mistakes*

Eligibility & Pathways
- ☐ *Understand CHL vs NCAA eligibility rules* *(including potential implications of new "5x5" legislation)*
- ☐ *Know which decisions permanently impact optionality*
- ☐ *Keep education pathways intact*

Representation & Advice
- ☐ *Begin process of vetting a player representative, with a goal of having an advisor in place by the beginning/middle of your U-16 season*
- ☐ *Make sure your family retains final decision-making authority*
- ☐ *Begin the process of identifying other key advisors if not already in place* *(skills coaches, school counsellors, strength & nutrition)*

Professional Advisors *(If Relevant)*
- ☐ *Legal or accounting services are usually not required at this stage*
- ☐ *Avoid paid consultants presenting themselves as mandatory*

Money & Exposure
- ☐ *Avoid pay-for-play or pay-for-promises*
- ☐ *Clearly understand costs vs value*
- ☐ *Avoid vague "exposure" guarantees* *(many "showcases/open tryouts" are a costly undertaking that often produce limited opportunities)*

Health & Welfare
- ☐ *Injury insurance is not necessary at this stage*
- ☐ *Prioritize development over league prestige –* *DON'T GO SOMEWHERE YOU AREN'T GOING TO PLAY!*
- ☐ *Make sure you have the mental health support you need*

Reality Check
- ☐ *Understand the odds of making the pros*
- ☐ *Have a career co-development plan* *(on-ice + off-ice)* ***in place***

AGES 17–19
INFORMED DECISIONS

Objective: *Choose paths with full understanding of consequences*

Eligibility Decisions
- ☐ *Confirm NCAA status before signing anything*
- ☐ *Understand the implications of junior vs college* *(do I go to the NCAA at 18, or do I wait until I am 20?)*

Representation
- ☐ *Verify agent/intermediary credentials*
- ☐ *Have contract terms reviewed independently* *This is becoming more important in the NIL era* *(see sports lawyer below)*
- ☐ *Don't accept any pressure-based timelines*

Professional Advisors *(If Relevant)*
- ☐ *Consult a sports lawyer before signing contracts*
- ☐ *Consult an accountant if income is earned or expected*
- ☐ *Confirm advisor independence* *(you should have someone in your court who is not tied to an agency or a team)*

Legal & Administration
- ☐ *Passport valid*
- ☐ *Understand visa/work permit requirements* *(teams will take care of this for you, but you should understand the process)*
- ☐ *Confirm medical and injury insurance coverage*

Financial Literacy
- ☐ *Address salary myths*
- ☐ *Review tax implications* *(Canada / U.S. / Europe)*
- ☐ *Realistically budget and understand your living costs* *Sometimes a lower salary with significant expense coverage can result in higher take-home than a higher salary with no expense coverage (example, ECHL contract vs AHL contract)!*
- ☐ *Start sound savings and budgeting habits*

Professional Development
- ☐ *Begin developing your personal brand and professional reputation*
- ☐ *Understand that your social media presence is part of your public profile*
- ☐ *Learn how to work effectively with media, team communications staff, sponsors, and community partners*
- ☐ *Build networking and relationship-management skills that support long-term career success*

Family Role
- ☐ *Clearly define decision-making roles*
- ☐ *Encourage independent advice*

AGES 20–21
RISK MANAGEMENT & READINESS

Objective: *Enter pro environments with eyes open*

Contracts
- ☐ *Understand length, release terms, and exit clauses*
- ☐ *Honestly assess salary vs. expenses*
- ☐ *Review injury termination clauses*

Professional Advisors *(If Relevant)*
- ☐ *Sports lawyer reviews all contracts and amendments*
- ☐ *Accountant manages cross-border income and taxes*
- ☐ *Insurance advisor reviews disability and loss-of-income coverage*

Lifestyle & Support
- ☐ *Confirm housing*
- ☐ *Prepare for cultural/language differences* *(if abroad)*
- ☐ *Have an off-season training and recovery plan in place*

Career Longevity
- ☐ *Have a plan for continuing your education*
- ☐ *Research European options* *(contracts, visas)*
- ☐ *Co-develop your off-ice career alongside playing career*
- ☐ *Continue building your professional network, personal brand, and off-ice opportunities beyond hockey*

Red Flags
- ☐ *"Last chance" pressure tactics*
- ☐ *Unverifiable league or team claims*
- ☐ *As always, be alert about "required" upfront payments to agents or teams*

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID –

- **SIGNING CONTRACTS WITHOUT INDEPENDENT REVIEW**
- **PAYING FOR PROMISES OR GUARANTEES**
- **ABANDONING EDUCATION PREMATURELY – BE A LIFELONG LEARNER!**
- **CONFUSING VISIBILITY WITH OPPORTUNITY**
- **ASSUMING TALENT OVERRIDES CONTRACTS, RULES, OR LEGALITY**

SCAN TO CONNECT

This checklist provides awareness, not guarantees. Its purpose is to help players and families ask better questions before committing to a professional pathway.

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