

KEY INSTRUCTIONAL POINTS

Skating is to hockey what running is to soccer. Skating is the foundation upon which all other skills are built. The level of performance attained by a player in passing, shooting, checking and stickhandling, are directly related to one's skating ability. The time spent improving a player's skating is a worthwhile investment due to the carry-over value to the many other aspects of the game.

Upon completion of this section, you will be better prepared to:

- Understand and describe the key elements of skating
- Basic Stance
- Edges
- Starts and Stops
- Striding
- Turning
- Pivots

BASIC STANCE

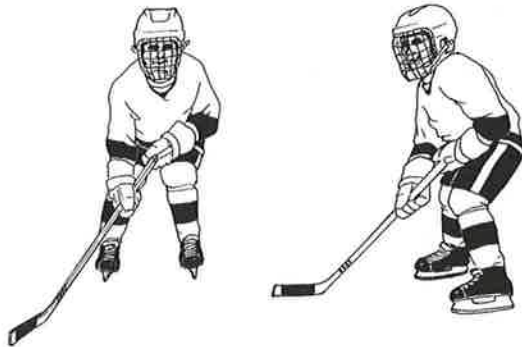
The basic stance, or "ready" position, permits a player to move in any direction from a solid base of support. It is particularly effective during face-off alignments or in front of the net when screening the goaltender or waiting for a rebound. This position is also used when executing many of the basic skills such as passing, shooting and checking.

Key Points

- Feet are shoulder width apart, pointing slightly outward
- Knees and ankles are flexed at approximately 45°
- The upper body leans slightly forward (approx. 45°) with the weight of the body on the balls of the feet
- The shoulders, knees and toes can be joined by a straight line when in the basic stance
- Head up, eyes looking forward
- The stick is held with both hands, blade flat on the ice and slightly to the side of the body

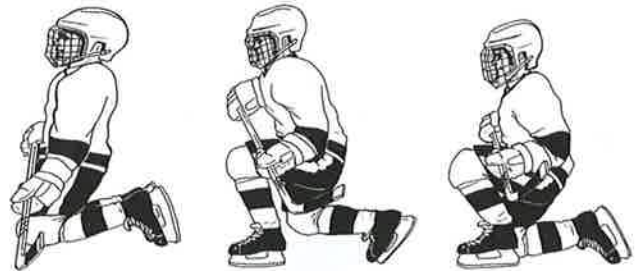
BALANCE

Balance is a basic skill required for the development of all hockey skills. A player who has developed balance can puckhandle, pass, and shoot much easier.



GETTING UP FROM ICE

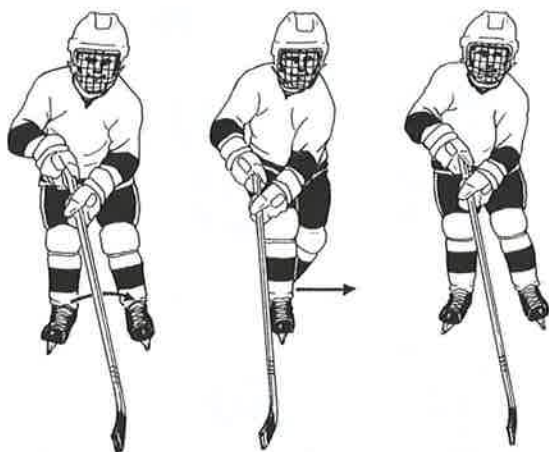
1. Always come to the knees.
2. Don't place hands on the ice. Keep both hands on the stick.
3. Slide one leg forward so that the blade of your skate is on the ice and follow with the other.



SKATE EDGES CONT...

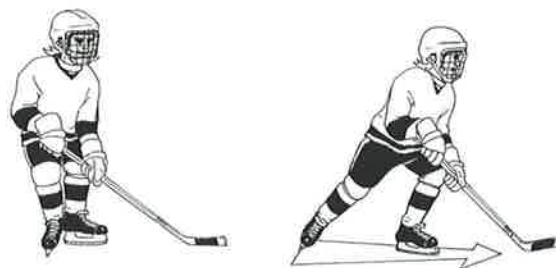
MOVING SIDEWAYS

1. Players start from basic stance.
2. The body moves at right angles to the direction of movement. Do not turn body in the direction the player is going.
3. Steps must be taken flat-footed.
4. Keep the stick out in front of you.
5. Walk slowly at first. As the players pick up the drill, speed up the tempo.
6. Progression:
 - a) Put the right skate in front of the left skate.
 - b) Take the left skate from behind the right skate and place it back in the normal stance position.
 - c) Repeat steps one and two as many times as required.



T-PUSH

1. Point the front skate in the direction of movement.
2. Place the back skate slightly behind the front skate, thus forming a "T".
3. Keep the whole blade flat on the ice. Keep weight on the back skate.



SCOOTING

Scooting involves T-push, helps to improve pushing power and leg extension.

1. Place the left skate behind the right skate, forming a T-push with left skate.
2. Push down and out with left leg, fully extend the left leg and glide on right skate.
3. Bring left skate quickly up into T-push position behind right skate before the next push is made.
4. Practice using both skates.

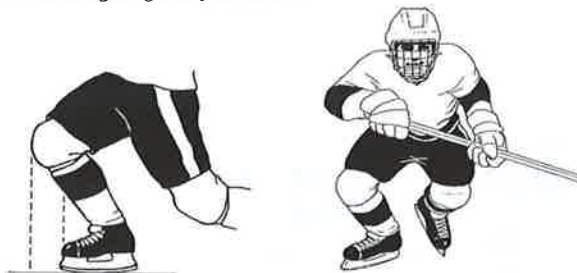


FORWARD STARTS

The ability to start quickly should be one of the first skating skills mastered by young hockey players. There are three types of forward starts used and depending on the game situation: front, crossover and T-starts.

Key Points

1. Basic stance is the starting position.
2. Centre of gravity is shifted forward with the body weight placed on the inside edge of the drive skate.
3. Body weight is placed over the drive leg which is rotated outward at an angle of approx. 90° from the player's chosen course.
4. As the number of strides increases, the player takes progressively longer strides, pushing more to the side rather than to the back.
5. Initial strokes (3 to 4) are short and quick, without gliding.
6. The drive leg is vigorously extended at the hip, knee and ankle.



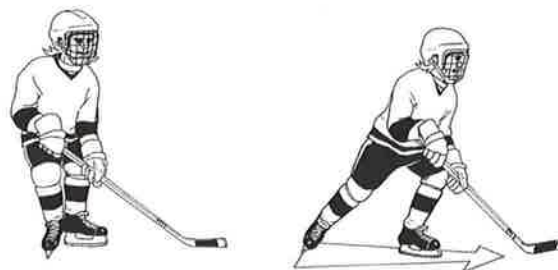
THE T START

The "T" Start is used when a player is stationary and knows beforehand the direction one wishes to travel. This is the case in some face-off situations. It is also used to teach beginners how to start as it is easier to master than the front start.

The primary difference between the "T" Start and the front start is in the positioning of the skates.

Key Points

1. Both legs are flexed slightly.
2. The driving leg is positioned at a 90° angle to the desired direction of travel, thus creating the "T" position.
3. The start is initiated by a thrust of the driving leg (inside edge).
4. Without any gliding motion, the lead foot is raised and rotated outward ready to perform another driving motion.



FORWARD SKATING

The efficiency of the skating stride depends on applying a few fundamental principles and optimum development of the muscles used in skating. Careful attention should be paid to the following key points when teaching forward skating.

Key Points

1. Basic Stance is the starting position.
2. Power is derived from a full and vigorous sequential extension of the hip, the knee and the ankle in a lateral thrust (to the side and not to the back as in the initial stroke).
3. The knee of the gliding leg must be well flexed extending beyond the toe of the skate in the gliding state.
4. The weight of the body is transferred over the striding leg at the beginning of each stride.
5. Recovery is executed in a circular motion, with skate low to the ice, passing under the centre of gravity.
6. Shoulders should be kept perpendicular to the intended direction with the muscles of the upper body relaxed.
7. The stick can be held in one or two hands depending on the game situation. The shoulder and arms muscles should be relaxed.



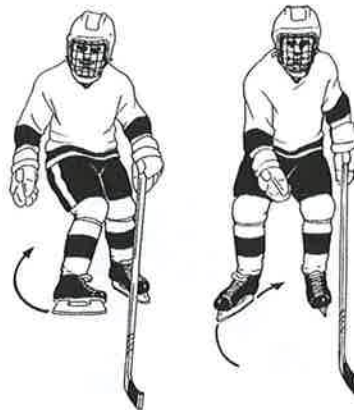
BACKWARD STANCE

1. Skating backwards is like sitting on a chair.
2. Keep the knees bent and back straight.
3. Feet and knees are shoulder width apart.
4. Lower centre of gravity by keeping the butt down.
5. Keep head up, chest out, and shoulders back.
6. Weight evenly distributed along blade of each skate.



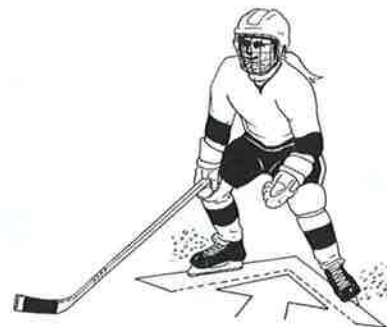
C-CUT FOR STARTING BACKWARDS

1. Start from basic stance.
2. Turn heel of right skate (driving leg) outward as far as possible. Rotation of leg at the hip also takes place inwards.
3. From bent knee position and pressing on the ball of foot, extend the leg by pushing hard and making a semi-circle cut in the ice with the blade. Ensure weight is on driving leg.
4. Final thrust comes from the toe of the skate blade as the ankle is flexed.
5. Return the right skate to its original place beside the left skate.
6. The left leg (supporting leg) must stay directly under the players' body.
7. Repeat with left skate.



V-STOP FOR BACKWARD SKATING

1. Spread feet shoulder width apart.
2. The toes of both skates are turned out and the heels are turned in.
3. The body leans forward. This forces the inside edges of skates against the ice.
4. Slight bend in knees during final phase of stop.
5. Legs become extended during final phase of stop. Pressure is thus exerted through the skate blade.
6. When stop is completed the player should end up in the basic stance, prepared to go off in any direction.



FORWARD SKATING CONT...

FRONT-FOOT STOP (INSIDE EDGE)

Technique is essentially the same as the two-foot parallel stop, except the inside leg is held back slightly above the ice.

1. From a regular skating stride, snap the skate of the front leg at a 90° angle to the direction of motion. Initiate with a rotating action of the hips and shoulders.
2. The weight of the body is on the front leg.
3. Pressure on the ice is applied on the inside edge and on the front part of the blade while extending the leg vigorously.
4. Inside leg is slightly off the ice ready to initiate a new movement.



FORWARD STOPS

For safety reasons, the stop should be one of the first skills taught. Use the various lines painted on the ice as stopping points in order to eliminate any unfortunate accidents which may occur close to the boards.

Stops are essential in avoiding checks, shaking off opponents or changing directions. The three types of stops commonly used are: two-foot parallel, outside leg and inside leg stops.

To stop sharply, weight should be distributed as evenly as possible over both skates, and pressure should be exerted on the front part of the blades while extending the legs vigorously – inside skate (outside edge) and outside skate inside edge.

Skates 6-8 inches apart.



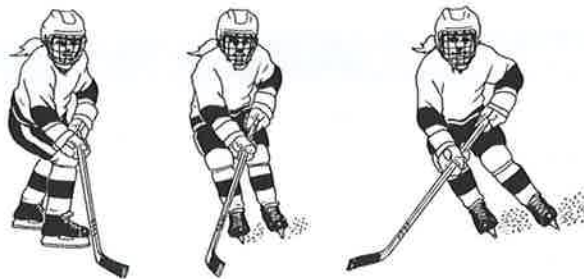
Inside skate beyond outside skate.



TWO-FOOT STOP

Will stop more quickly than a one o'clock or eleven o'clock stop.

1. Glide on both skates as you approach the stopping point.
2. Basic stance – head up, knees bent, back straight, and feet shoulder width apart. Must turn sideways to the direction of travel, by turning the body to a right angle to the direction of motion. Turn initially to just the strong side.
3. Begin the stop by turning the shoulders first with the hips and legs following.
4. Turning the hips swing the outside leg into braking position. The inside leg acts as a pivot while turning into a braking position. Skates are shoulder width apart with the inside skate slightly ahead of the outside skate. The weight is equally distributed on both skates.
5. Extend the legs vigorously while exerting pressure on the front part of the blades. We are using the inside edge of the outside skate and the outside edge of the inside skate, especially the inside edge of the lead skate.
6. Keep head and shoulders straight.
7. Keep two hands on the stick.



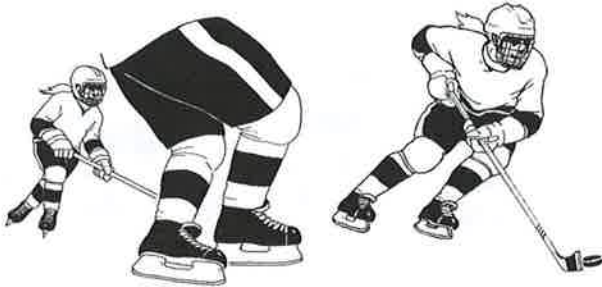
FORWARD TURNS CONT...

FORWARD CROSSOVER TURN

Forward crossovers are used to change direction while attempting to gain speed.

Key Points

1. Rotate the head, shoulder, arms and stick in the desired direction of travel.
2. The body leans well into the circle with the trunk bent slightly forward.
3. The weight is transferred from the inside to the outside leg which now thrusts by an extension of the hip, knee and ankle.
4. To increase speed, bend the knees as much as possible before extending the driving leg.
5. Body thrust is alternately carried out by both legs, while the body weight is kept above the drive leg.
6. Following a vigorous extension of the hip, knee and ankle of the inside leg (outside edge), the outside leg (inside edge) crosses over the inside leg.



CROSSOVER PUMPING

Used to keep speed or to increase speed while skating on a curve.

1. Skating on the circles.
2. Push outside skate out toward the side keeping the blade in contact with the ice until the leg is fully extended.
3. Push down on the ball of your foot at the end of the push so that you are using your ankles to get that little extra push from each stroke.
4. Lean into the circle from the waist down by pushing your hips into the circle and keeping your inside shoulder up.
5. After extension in step 2, swing your outside leg over the skate and place outside skate parallel to the inside skate.
6. The inside skate then pushes to full extension outward under the body (using outside edge).
7. When fully extended, return it quickly to its original position under the body and beside the outside skate.
8. Repeat the sequence in a continuous manner, pushing with equal force with both strokes.
9. Repeat in both directions.



BACKWARD TURNS

Backward turns in both directions are essential for mobility and positioning, and are skills that should be mastered by all players.

Backward lateral crossovers permit a player to move laterally in order to remain in front of an attacker. They can be executed from a stopped position or while skating backward. The mechanics of this movement are similar to those used during the backward crossover start. (See previous)

Key Points

1. Basic stance is the starting position.
2. The hips and trunk turn slightly towards the direction of the crossover; the head remains straight.
3. Facing the play, the body is moved in the desired direction of travel by the extension of the outside leg (inside edge) followed by an extension of the inside leg (outside edge).
4. The outside leg crosses over in front of the inside leg and is brought down on the ice. This action is repeated until the desired position is attained.
5. The body weight is shifted to the leg that remains on the ice.

BACKWARD CROSSOVER TURNS

The backward crossover turn is used to shift from backward to forward skating without having to come to a complete stop.

Key Points

1. Basic stance is the starting position.
2. Head and shoulders open in the direction the player intends to pivot.
3. The outside leg extended, and exerts force (inside edge) on the ice by a vigorous extension of the hip, knee and ankle.
4. The inside leg (outside edge) extended and the outside leg (inside edge) is brought back to begin the final stage of backwards to forwards transition.
5. The inside leg (outside edge) completes its final thrust, the weight is now on the outside leg (inside edge), when the pivots to assume a forward skating position.

One-leg backward stop



PUCKHANDLING STANCE

1. Stick length.

When on skates, the stick should come up to an area between the collar bone and chin, so that free movement of the top hand in front of the body is possible.

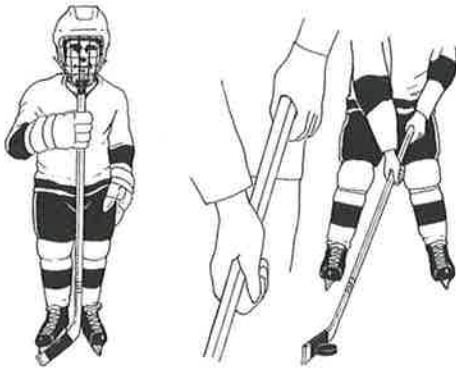
2. Stick lie.

When assuming the correct skating stance, the blade should be flat on the ice.

3. Younger players should have junior size sticks that have narrower shafts and shorter blades.

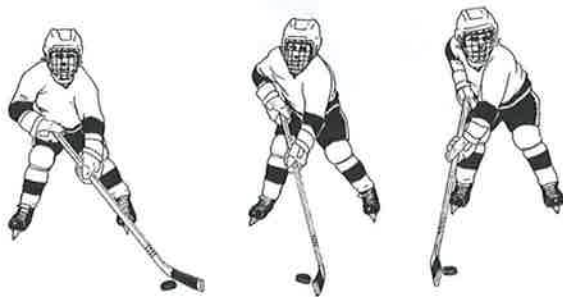
4. The grip.

- a) The top hand must be right at the end of the stick.
- b) The lower hand should be 20 -30 cm down the shaft.
- c) The "V" formed by the thumb and the forefinger should be pointing straight up the shaft.
- d) Blade of stick is flat on the ice.
- e) Keep the head up and use peripheral vision to look at puck. Younger players should be allowed to look and feel for the puck.



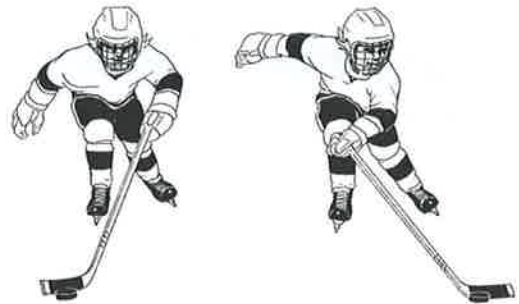
STATIONARY PUCKHANDLING

1. Assume puckhandling stance.
2. Move the puck from side to side by rolling the wrists. This cups the stick on both the forehand and backhand, thus, allowing better control.
3. To roll the wrists, turn the toe of the blade inwards and the heel outwards, then reverse direction.
4. Puck is handled in the middle of the blade.
5. Keep arms and upper body relaxed.
6. Puck control must be smooth, rhythmical, and quiet.



OPEN-ICE CARRY

1. Players have control of stick with top hand only. The puck is pushed ahead with the bottom edge of the stick blade.
2. Arm action is in a slight forward thrust by straightening the arm at the elbow.
3. The puck should be pushed alternately with the blade pointed to the left then to the right.
4. Push the puck only slightly ahead.

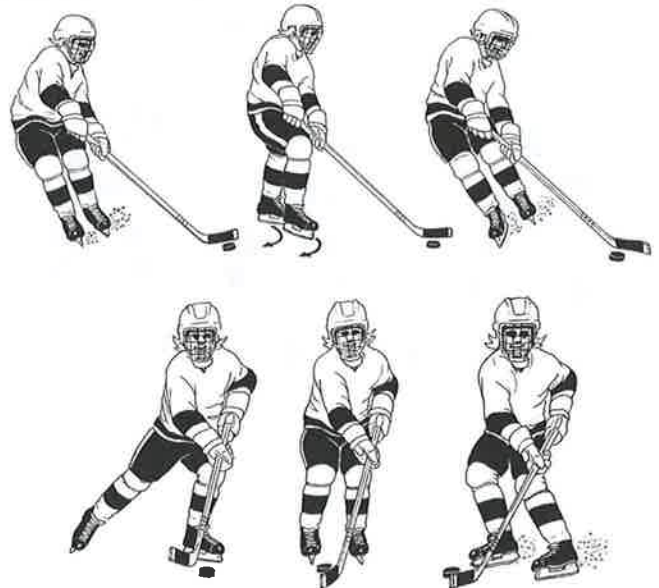


USE OF FEET TO CONTROL THE PUCK

1. Turn toe out so that puck can be controlled by the skate blade.
2. Players should take a quick look down but not for too long. Try to keep head up.
3. Keep puck within one metre of skates.

STOPPING WITH PUCK

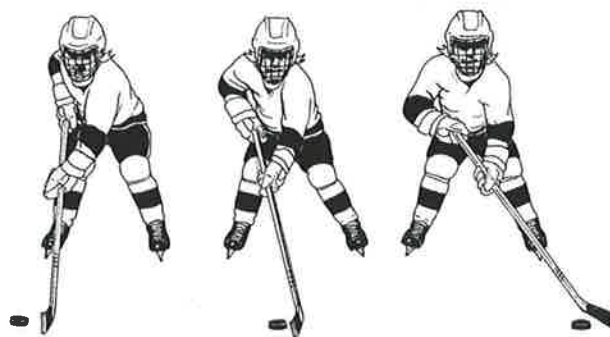
1. When stopping, the puck is kept under control by cupping the stick blade over the puck.
2. Keep two hands on the stick.



PASSING CONT...

RECEIVING A PASS

1. Head up looking at the puck.
2. Present a target, stick blade on the ice.
3. Keep blade at 90° toward direction of puck.
4. As the puck contacts the blade, some give is allowed providing a cushioning effect.
5. Be prepared to pass.



TYPES OF BACKHAND PASSES

It is essential that the backhand pass be perfected. As it is a very difficult skill, it should be given special attention.

Key Point

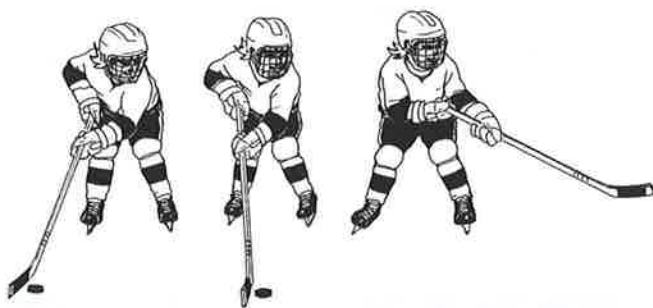
A player must be able to execute a backhand pass without cutting down on skating speed, changing direction or excessively rotating the shoulders.

BACKHAND PASS

Like its forehand counterpart, this is perhaps the most often used backhand pass.

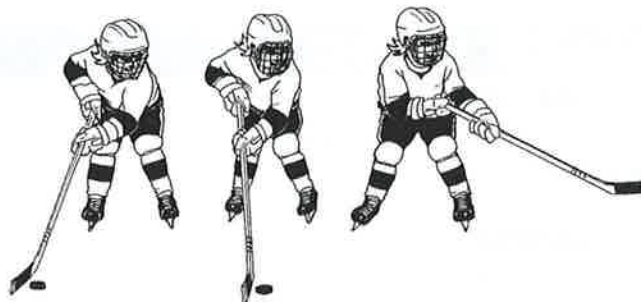
Key Points

1. The grip on the stick is similar to that used when stickhandling and tightens during the passing action.
2. The weight of the body should be transferred from the leg furthest from the receiver to the closest leg.
3. The upper hand must move in front of the body to maintain the blade perpendicular to the target.
4. The length of the sweep will depend on the time available and the distance of the receiver.



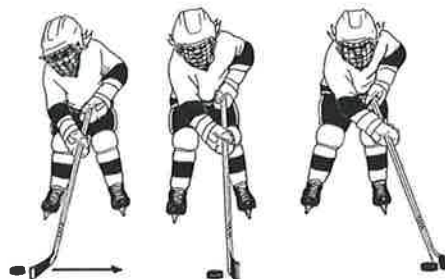
BACKHAND SWEEP PASS

1. Hands are well away from the body.
2. Bring the puck beyond the plane of the body.
3. Shift the weight to the back leg.
4. Head up, looking at target.
5. Cup the blade of the stick over the puck.
6. Sweeping action of stick across the body to slide the puck.
7. Shift weight to the front foot.
8. Snap and roll wrists.
9. Follow through low.
10. Be prepared to receive.



RECEIVING PASS BACKHAND

1. Head up watching puck.
2. Stick is on the ice for a target.
3. Cup your stick and cushion the impact by relaxing the wrists.
4. Be prepared to pass.



TYPES OF FOREHAND SHOTS CONT...

WRIST SHOT

The wrist shot is a surprise shot which depends on the quickness of release. It is a useful shot around the opponent's net, where space and time are often limited.

FLIP SHOT

A technique used to hit the upper corners of the net is to close in, or to lift the puck over the sprawling goalkeeper.

1. Puck is on the toe of the stick blade which is near the front foot.
2. Lift is given by tilting the blade so that only its bottom edge contacts the puck.
3. Deliver from in front of the body with a scooping action of the stick by the wrists.
4. Need a quick snap of the wrists and a high follow through.

Backhand is similar, except puck is closer to the heel of the blade to get better action.



FOREHAND WRIST SHOT

1. Basically the same grip as passing.
2. Bring puck beyond plane of the body.
3. Keep the puck in contact with the stick blade.
4. Weight is on the back foot.
5. In the process of sweeping the puck forward, the weight is transferred onto the front foot.
6. Snap and roll the wrists. Pull the top hand and push the bottom hand.
7. Follow through low for a low shot, and high for a high shot.

TYPES OF BACKHAND SHOTS

SWEEP SHOT

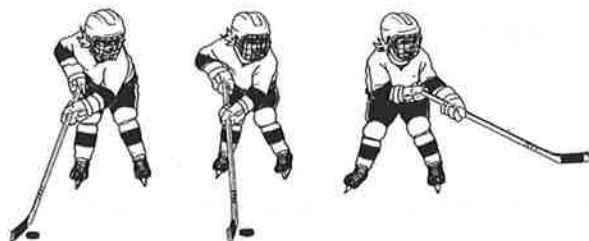
The sweep shot is perhaps the most commonly used backhand shot. It is both fast and accurate.

Key Points

1. Grip is usually wider than in the stickhandling position.
2. With the skates directed at the target, the shoulders are rotated sideways and the trunk is slightly bent over the puck.
3. The front knee is well flexed.
4. The sweeping action is directed at the goal by a vigorous rotation of the trunk and shoulders, a forceful extension of the legs, followed by a dynamic action of the arms and wrists.
5. During this action, the weight of the body is transferred from the back leg to the front leg as the puck travels from the heel to the toe of the stick blade.

BACKHAND SWEEP SHOT

1. Basically same grip as passing.
2. Bring puck beyond plane of the body.
3. Weight is on the back leg.
4. In the process of sweeping the puck through the weight is transferred to the front foot.
5. Head up looking for opening.
6. Snap and roll the wrists. Push the top hand and pull the bottom hand.
7. Release the puck and follow through low.



TYPES OF DEKES CONT...

BODY FAKES

Body fakes may include movement of the head, upper or lower body, in a deceptive movement designed to get the defender to adjust position or lean in the wrong direction. When this occurs, the puck carrier accelerates quickly in the opposite direction before the defender has time to recover. These fakes are normally initiated just outside the checking range of the opponent. This allows the puck to be moved through the defensive triangle which is formed by the skates and stick of the defender.



LOOK AWAY

The puck carrier, by looking or glancing at a teammate and indicating a passing intention may force the defender to momentarily adjust position in the direction of the potential pass receiver. This results in the creation of space or an avenue for the puck carrier to attack the net.

Keeping body between opponent and puck



DRIVING THE NET

An offensive player, with an initial outside position on a defender, uses strong crossover strides or leans heavily with an extended inside leg and arm in order to cut to the front of the net for a potential scoring opportunity. The attacker attempts to drive to the far post and maintains one's body position between the puck and the defender so as to protect the puck.



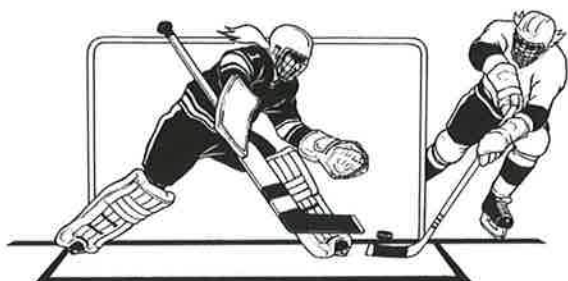
SHOOTING AND PASSING FAKES

FAKE SHOT

The attacker, by initiating a shooting action, may force the defender to momentarily 'freeze' in a shot blocking response. This allows the puck carrier to accelerate past the defender and attack the net.

WALKOUTS

When in possession of the puck in the offensive zone (behind the goal line or along the side boards), a player should take advantage of any seam or lane to attack the net. The puck carrier fakes a pass to force the defender to adjust one's position and then accelerates through the open lane to a potential scoring position. In the same way, a player receiving a pass should fire through an open lane created by a defender who fails to adjust one's position.

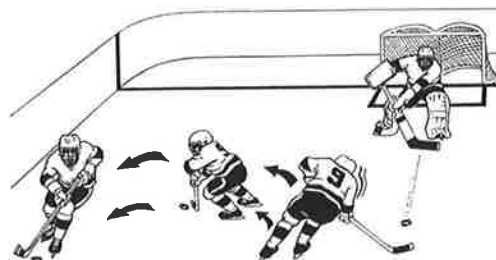


SHAKING A DEFENDER ONE-ON-ONE

The puck carrier must also be able to maintain possession of the puck when under checking pressure by a defender. Use of the body, skates and stick, as well as evasive skating movements, are required to shake a defender one-on-one, quickly enough.

TURN UP

This is an offensive manoeuvre used by players who have just recovered a loose puck while skating in the direction of their own net. It may also be used by puck carriers who are momentarily forced to retreat towards their own net. The offensive player first executes a fake by dipping the shoulder and angling the skates as if to turn in one direction. The puck carrier then rapidly makes a tight turn (preferably towards the near boards) with the puck in the opposite direction and accelerates as the turn is completed. The attacker is now in a position to pass to a teammate or skate with the puck.



CHECKING SKILLS

Checking is carried out to gain possession of the puck. However, before teaching checking, it is imperative that skating skills be taught as they are the base upon which checking skills are built. Elements of skating skills, speed, agility, balance and strength are key skills required in the art of checking. The coach must recognize that before checking skills can be taught or developed, the player must be introduced to and have functionally mastered the basics of skating.

Upon completion of this chapter, you will be better prepared to:

- Relate skating skills to checking skills
- Instruct or teach checking skills in a progressive manner
- Instruct or teach protection skills
- Instruct your players in the rules pertaining to checking
- Checking from behind
- Curbing stick infractions

SKATING SKILLS & THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHECKING

Each of these skating skills has a direct relationship with checking skills. The majority of mistakes made when checking an opponent stem from incorrect body position on the skates, which is directly related to skating skill.

For example, when a two foot stop is completed, both legs must be in a position to initiate the drive into the new skating position. If the legs are not in a proper flexed position, both time and power are lost. The drive should be initiated by the back leg, so that at no time are the legs crossed. If the legs are crossed over at the precise time of a check, the attacking player has only to move to the side to beat the checker.

Fundamental body position errors and leg movements errors such as this example creates compounding problems in all other forms of checking skills, from the poke check to the body check. Therefore, skating should be taught in a progressive fashion (i.e. the basics of the forward and backward skating stride switch to speed of leg movements, correct body position for two and one foot stops both forward and backward, quick starts, lateral movements, forward and backward crossovers, pivots from forward to backward) and once mastered, a coach should start teaching checking.

CHECKING WITHOUT MAKING CONTACT

Angling can be considered as a player's first line of defense. Body and stick positions are important in checking without making contact. This section will examine angling as one technique of checking without making contact.

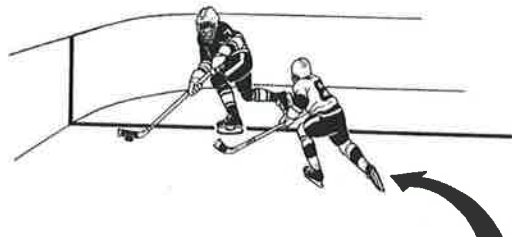
ANGLING

Angling is the ability to force an opponent to go in the direction you want. This would normally be towards the board or to the outside of you.

Key Points

1. Remain between the puck carrier and the pass receiver, gradually reducing the puck carrier's space.
2. Skate parallel to the opponent or in an arc or circular movement, but not in a straight line.
3. Skate slightly behind the opponent, thus not allowing the opponent to turn up ice to the inside of you.
4. Adjust your speed to the opponent's speed.
5. Your stick is always on the ice in the position to intercept a pass, and as a decoy to force the opposition to the desired direction.

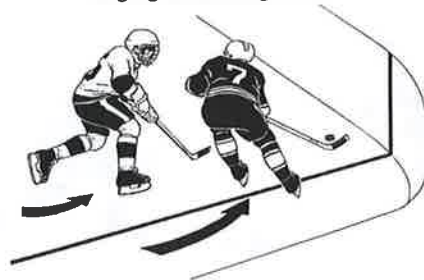
Angling



Angling: Closing the gap



Angling: Establishing contact



Angling: The pin



STICK CHECKING CONT...

HIT (THE BLADE OF THE STICK)

Key Points

1. Skate parallel to the puck carrier.
2. When the puck is on the puck carrier's stick blade, on the opposite side of you, hit the stick to provoke the loss of puck control.
3. To be effective, you must forcefully hit the stick near the heel of the stick blade.

Blade contact

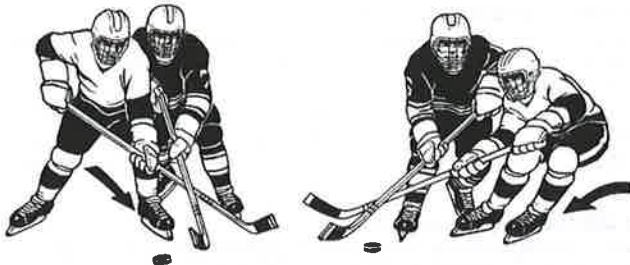


STICK LIFT

Key Points

1. Approach the puck carrier from behind.
2. When close enough, lift the shaft of the opponent's stick near its heel and compete for possession of the puck.

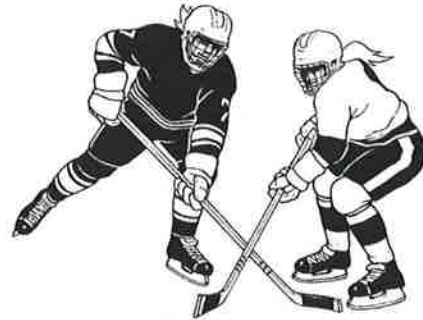
Note: If you are close enough to the puck carrier, you should position your body in front of the puck carrier. The stick lift may be done when approaching the opponent from an angle. Surprise and strength are key requirements for this skill.



STICK PRESS

Key Points

1. The stick is placed over the shaft, below the opponent's bottom stick hand.
2. Just as the opponent is to receive a pass, or move to redirect the puck, press down firmly.



PROTECTION IN BODY CHECKING

It is very important to have the ability to avoid or prepare oneself for a check.

To avoid being checked:

1. Keep the head and eyes up, scanning the play.
2. Maintain movement or motion.
3. Don't reach back for a pass unless you are sure there is no opposition player in front of you.

To prepare to receive a check:

1. Maintain a wide stance by bending the knees and leaning in the direction from which the check is coming.
2. Initiate movement towards the checked just prior to impact and ensure low contact.
3. Wear the appropriate protective equipment.
4. When falling down or colliding with the boards, absorb the shock with the largest available portion of the body.
5. Avoid falling on extended body parts.
6. During off-ice sessions, enhance your strength and flexibility.