

**SUBURBAN  
Hockey Schools**



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# **COACHING MANUAL**

*For players 14 & under*

# COACHING OUTLINE FOR PLAYERS 14 & UNDER

## **INDIVIDUAL SKILLS**

### **BALANCE AND AGILITY**

Both with the puck and without it, players need to be able to stop, start and cut quickly and turn sharply in all directions with good balance and control. Losing balance for just a split second is the difference between getting to the opening, or getting a shot off in the offensive zone or closing the gap and making the check on defense.

- Knee bend and body control are major factors in balance. Players should have maximum knee bend at all times with the upper body upright (not bending forward at the waist), with good arm and stick control, stick blade on the ice, leading the player's body whichever way it is going.

### **FOOT QUICKNESS**

Getting up on the toes for a quick and explosive first three steps is the difference between getting to the loose puck or not.

- From a standstill, a stop, a tight turn or getting up from the knees, players need to take long, quick steps, like a sprinter coming out of the starting blocks to win those short races.
- Balance, knee bend and body control play a major factor in their ability to make quick starts.

### **STRENGTH ON SKATES**

Taking a hit, making a hit, or winning the one on one contact battles in the corners and on the boards are a huge part of the game.

- Players should have solid shoulder-width base with their skates and try to be on the inside edges as much as possible. Getting caught leaning on an opponent on the outside edges of the skates means you are relying on them to hold you up, and you are in a weak position on your skates.
- Good knee bend is essential and the upper body should be upright (not bending forward at the waist).
- Contact should be made with the shoulders.

## **LATERAL MOVEMENT**

The game is not played in straight lines. Players with the ability to cut quickly laterally with the puck are the ones who are able to create some space to make a play and are difficult to defend.

- Quick feet, good body control and balance are necessary for quick lateral movement.
- As players spend about 50% of their time cutting and crossing over in games, they should spend at least that amount of time each practice working on it in various situations.

## **FORWARD STRIDING**

Speed is the name of the game and players need to have long, efficient, powerful strides.

- The less upper body movement the better, with a slight forward bend at the waist, and arms moving up and back (not side to side) in rhythm with the leg strides.
- Good knee bend is essential for balance and power, with long diagonal strides finishing with a thrust off of the inside edge of the toe. The more knee bend on the glide leg, the longer the stride can be.
- Players also need to return their skates in a straight line completely back under the body to set up for the next stride. Players skating with a wide base created by returning the skates only partially back, will have a shorter stride, and ultimately less speed and less stamina.

### Common problems

- Wide base – short strides – reduced speed and stamina
- Minimal knee bend – poor balance, short strides and less power and speed
- Side to side upper body movement – poor balance, bad rhythm, less speed
- Bending forward at the waist – poor balance – high heel kick on return – less speed

## **STOPPING**

With and without the puck, stopping with good balance and control is essential to being able to start quickly in another direction.

- Skates should be about shoulder width apart, roughly side-by-side, using the inside edge of the lead skate and the outside edge of the trailing skate to stop. The more weight that can be put on the outside edge of the trailing skate, the quicker the player will be able to start in the opposite direction off of that skate.
- Knees should be bent for balance and control with the upper body upright. Bend should occur at the ankles and knees.
- Stick should be on the ice in front, and then be rotated quickly to lead the player back in the other direction. When stopping with the puck, it should be on the heel of the stick, using the wrists to cup the blade over it for better control. When stopping to the forehand side, the player needs to manipulate the stick with his hands so that the blade faces straight ahead of his skates. This is accomplished by bringing the top hand underneath, and the bottom hand over top.

### Common problems

- Feet too close together
- Feet not aligned side by side
- Straightening legs while stopping
- Stick off ice, upper body rotated
- Leaning into stop, upper body not upright

## **TIGHT TURNING**

To change direction quickly without stopping, or to elude an opponent with the puck, a player needs to be able to turn quickly, and sharply, with good balance and control, while maintaining speed. This ability to cut back comes in especially handy in tight areas like the corners when players are trying to maintain possession of the puck and have no passing options.

- Skates should be about shoulder width apart for stability, in a heel –toe relationship, with the inside skate ahead of the outside skate.
- Ankles need to be bent to get on the outside edge of the inside skate, and inside edge of the outside skate.
- Good knee bend allows for good balance and sets the player up to begin striding in the other direction
- Upper body should be upright with the head and shoulders rotated in the direction of the turn, and the stick blade leading the player into the turn.
- The weight shifts toward the heels of the skate blades as the player cuts.

### Common problems

- Feet too close together
- Feet not aligned in a heel-toe relationship
- Lack of knee bend
- Stick off ice, upper body rotated in the opposite direction of the turn
- Leaning into turn, upper body not upright

## **FORWARD CROSSOVERS**

Quick feet, long strides and good balance combine to generate good forward crossover acceleration.

- Upper body should be upright, with shoulders rotated in the direction of the turn
- Stick blade should be on the ice on the inside of the turn
- Good knee bend allows for balance and for long, powerful strides
- Stride off of inside edge of outside skate, pushing to the outside (not back) and finishing with a thrust off of the inside edge of the toe of the skate
- There should be an equally long and powerful stride off of the outside edge of the inside skate, pushing across to the outside, and finishing with a thrust off of the outside edge of the toe of the skate.

### Common problems

- Short choppy strides
- Unequal strides, longer push with inside edge than outside edge
- Lack of knee bend
- Stick off ice, upper body rotated in the opposite direction of the turn
- Leaning into turn, upper body not upright

### **PIVOTING – FORWARD TO BACKWARD**

To be able to face the puck, and face the play at all times, players need to be able to pivot quickly with good balance at top speed.

- Upper body upright, good knee bend, weight over skates, not bending forward at the waist
- Feet apart to form good base for stability
- To release blades from ice, player needs to straighten up slightly, while rotating stick, head, shoulders, and hips around to begin skating backward

#### Common problems

- Legs straight, feet too close together
- Bending forward at the waist
- Stick and upper body out of control causing poor balance

### **PIVOTING – BACKWARD TO FORWARD (Mohawk)**

To be able to face the puck, and face the play at all times, players need to be able to pivot quickly with good balance at top speed.

- Upper body upright, good knee bend, weight over skates, not bending forward at the waist
- With weight on pivot skate, rotate stick, head, shoulders, and hips, bring heels together under body
- Step from an inside edge to an inside edge, without breaking stride

#### Common problems

- Straightening up
- Bending forward at the waist
- Crossing feet over
- No rotating upper body

## **STARTING – FORWARD**

To win the short races to the puck or to open ice, players need to have quick feet and be able to get upon their toes with long, quick steps for explosive starts.

- Good knee bend, leaning forward with the upper body, feet about shoulder width apart, ankles bent inward to get on the inside edges of the toes of the skates, heels inward so feet are in a V position
- With arms at the sides, driving up and back, player takes three long running steps with skates pointed out to the sides to grip the ice with the inside edges of the toes, then begins striding

### Common problems

- Poor knee bend or straightening upward, not driving forward
- Not on toes of skates or toes not pointed to the side to grip the ice
- Arms moving side to side, not up and back

## **STARTING – CROSSOVER**

To be able to start quickly from a stop, players need to be in a strong, balanced position, to generate power on the crossover start

- Upper body should be upright, with good knee bend, feet shoulder width apart, using the inside edge of the lead skate, and outside edge of the trailing skate
- The more weight that can be shifted to the trailing skate(outside edge), the faster the player will be able to step across and push off of the outside edge of that skate
- First push is off of the outside edge of the toe of the trailing skate, while crossing the other skate over top
- The upper body is rotated with head up, and arms driving up and back, with the next two steps off of the inside edges of the toes of the skates (as in a forward start)
- Player then begins striding

### Common problems

- Straightening up
- Not rolling ankle and pushing off of the outside edge of the trailing skate
- Not getting on toes of skates
- Short crossover step and short forward steps on toes
- Not rotating upper body, trailing stick behind

## **BACKWARD STRIDING**

As in forward striding, full-out speed is the name of the game, and a player needs to have good balance, body control, and power to make it happen.

- Upper body should be upright (no bending at the waist), with good knee bend, like sitting on a stool
- Feet should be side by side under the body
- With weight shifted to striding leg, toe should be pointed in and ankle bend inward to get on inside edge of the skate. Push is to the side, ending when the leg is fully extended, and with a final thrust of the inside edge of the toe of the skate, shifting the weight to the other skate
- This push to the side generates the force to glide backward on the other leg, as the pushing skate is returned back underneath the body to set up for the next stride with the other skate (completing the C-cut)
- Arms should be tight to the sides, driving up and back, not side to side across the front of the body

### Common problems

- Not enough knee bend, which limits balance and the length of the stride
- Bending forward at the waist, and losing balance forward during the stride
- Not shifting weight onto striding skate at the beginning of the stride, and onto the other skate at the end of the stride
- Wide base – not returning skates completely under body at the end of the stride
- Sideways movement with the arms across the upper body

## **BACKWARD CROSSUNDERS**

Similar to forward crossovers, but in reverse, with the inside skate actually crossing under and behind the outside skate.

- Good knee bend with upper body upright and head and shoulders rotated to the inside of the turn
- Stick on the ice on the inside of the turn
- With the ankle bent inward, the first push is off of the inside edge of the outside skate, to the outside (not back), finishing with a thrust of the toe
- The next push is with the outside edge of the inside skate, with the ankle bent outward, pushing under and across to the outside, ending with a thrust off of the outside edge of the toe of the skate
- Players should strive for long, equal pushes with both skates, deriving most of the power from the outside edge push of the inside skate, reaching as far as possible to the inside of the turn, then pulling across to the outside

### Common problems

- Bending forward at the waist
- Lack of knee bend resulting in short pushes with the inside edge of the outside skate and outside edge of the inside skate
- Losing balance and control by not having shoulders and upper body rotated to the inside of the turn

## **BACKWARD STOPPING**

To be able to be in good defensive position and always face the play, players need to be able to stop backwards in a good position to start in any direction.

- While moving backward, player needs to have good knee bend, leaning slightly forward at the waist to help take some of the weight off of the skate blades
- Skates need to be brought underneath the body in a V position with heels in (about 6" apart) and toes to the sides with the weight on the middle of the blades.
- Once in this position, more weight that is applied to the blades, the faster the player will stop. Player is in excellent position for a good, quick forward start.
- Another option is to use a one-foot T-stop, where one skate is brought in behind the other (so the feet form a T), and the inside edge of that skate is used to stop the player. This stop is advantageous when a player wants to move forward to one side or the other after the stop, rather than straight ahead, as it puts the feet in position to do a good, quick forward start in that direction.

### Common problems

- Spreading feet apart and pushing to the outside, rather than bringing the heels together underneath the body, resulting in poor balance and mobility
- Not bending the knees causing poor balance and control

## **BACKWARD STARTING**

Players need to be able to face the play, and begin skating backward from a standstill, with quick feet, power and good balance.

- Player should start from a good powerful ready position, upper body upright, knees bent, turned sideways, skates side by side, with the weight on the back skate
- Bending the ankle inward and turning the toe in, the first push is to the side, thrusting off of the toe (making a C-cut)
- As this push begins to propel the player backward, the next push is off of the inside edge of the front foot, bending the ankle outward and bringing it across behind the first skate (a crossunder), finishing with a thrust off of the outside edge of the toe of the skate
- At this point the player should generated enough power and speed to begin backward striding without crossing over any more, although some players may require a couple of crossunders to get up to speed

### Common problems

- Bending too much at the waist and getting too far forward on the toes of the skates resulting in poor balance
- Not bending enough at the knees resulting in shorter, less powerful strides
- Not getting a push off of the outside edge of the inside skate by not rolling the ankle of the inside skate outward and driving it across behind the other skate

## **STICK STRENGTH**

Players need to have a strong stick to be able to control and handle the puck, and to use it effectively to check, or battle for the puck.

- The stick should be light enough (and short enough) that the player can use it effectively with one hand for poke checks and sweep checks and for controlling the puck when in open ice at full speed when two hands are not needed.
- When two hands are needed for puck control (stickhandling, passing, shooting), the hands should be about the width of the players body apart on the stick, gripping it firmly, but not squeezing it. The bottom hand has to be able to move up and down as needed during the course of the action.
- In battles for the puck, and battles of strength (checking, etc.), players should have a strong stick, moving the bottom hand about halfway down the shaft for more strength.

### Common problems

- Leaving an inch or two sticking out at the butt end – dangerous and illegal
- Hands too close together at the end of the stick – very weak

## **STICK QUICKNESS**

Players need to have a quick stick when handling the puck, (stickhandling, passing, shooting) and to be an effective checker (poke checking, sweep checking, stick lifting) to angle and take away passing lanes.

- The stick should be light enough that the player can use it effectively with one hand for poke checks and sweep checks and two hands when handling the puck or battling for the puck.

## **STICKHANDLING**

Players need to be able to handle the puck in all situations and with their head up, ready to beat an opponent, pass the puck or shoot the puck at any time.

- Puck should be handled toward the heel of the stick for better control and so it is in position to make a pass or shoot
- Player needs to use the wrists to manipulate the stick blade so that it is cupped over the puck as it moves side to side as the player moves forward.
- In most instances the puck should be handled in front of the skates so that a player has multiple options (moving or passing to the left, or moving or passing to the right). Handling the puck to the side of the body makes it very difficult to go across the body with the puck.
- Hands need to be away from the body to be able to manipulate and maneuver the puck in a number of different situations

### Common problems

- Hands held tightly to the body – limits movement and maneuverability
- Not using wrists – poor puck control, puck will be lost off of the blade
- Head down – player can't see ice to make a decision or a play
- Handling puck at side of the body – limits options with the puck

## **DEKING**

Movement with the puck - the ability to move the puck quickly from side to side, getting an opponent to start to lean, or commit one way, thinking you are going that way, then quickly moving the puck back across the other way to get around them. Puck carrier must have head up, and be able to move the puck quickly across the body, shifting the weight from one side to the other, as the puck moves from one side to the other.

## **CREATING SPACE**

Movement by the puck carrier - Getting a defender to over-commit one way or another by moving with the puck one way or another. On a 1 on 1 rush attacking the offensive zone, a puck carrier would cut with the puck to the inside, forcing the defenseman to move to the inside, then quickly cut back to the outside to take advantage of the space created to beat the defender wide (inside-out move). Other moves to create space are a stop-up or a turn-up (using speed to drive a defender deep in the offensive zone, then stopping up, and taking advantage of the separation created), or a cut-back (controlling the puck in the offensive zone, using your body to protect the puck from a defender, so they are in effect chasing you, then quickly cutting back to the left or right, losing them, to create an open lane to the net, or some space to make a play.

## **FULL SPEED & IN TRAFFIC**

When in open ice, players should be able to skate and control the puck with one hand on the stick at full speed (ie. on a breakaway), so they do not break stride and the puck does not slow them down. There are also times when they need to move at full speed with the puck with two hands on the stick, as they might need to beat a defender, or make a play with the puck. Handling the puck with the head up in traffic is also an essential skill to avoid being hit, and to make the correct play with the puck.

## **USING FEET**

The ability to handle the puck with the feet is a very useful skill in several situations. Players need to be aware of their skate blades and how they can manipulate them to use the inside or outside edges of the blades to kick the puck soccer style to themselves or to a teammate, or to be able to receive a pass.

- Carrying the puck – When carrying the puck in front of the body, if the puck is lost of the stick blade, the inside edge of the skate blade can be used to kick the puck back up to the stick
- Battling for the puck – In battles in the corner, when using the body and stick to fight for position and possession with an opponent, the skate blades can be used to kick the puck to an open area where the player or a teammate can retrieve it.
- Passing the puck – When the stick is tied up, the skate blades can be used to make an effective pass.
- Receiving a pass – Passes from the side that are in the skates can be quickly re-directed to the stick blade, by angling the toe inward so the puck deflects off of the outside edge of the blade, up to the stick blade. On passes made to the front side of the player that are not on the stick, the player should be able to use the inside edges of the blade to kick the puck quickly to the stick.

## **PASSING**

The quickness of a pass and the accuracy of the pass are the two key elements of whether it will have any success. Players need to make a decision to make the pass, and release it immediately, making the pass firm, on the ice and on the tape of their teammate.

- Puck should begin on heel of blade with the blade of the stick, cupped or closed over the puck for better control
- Hands need to be away from the body and pass made with the wrists. The action of the wrists will manipulate the stick blade from the closed position, to open and then finish closed, pointing in the direction of the pass destination
- With wrist action, puck spins from heel and released toward the toe. Spinning action helps to make the puck easier to receive.
- Head up and follow through in direction of pass to hit the target. For a moving target, be sure to “lead” the receiver, to pass where they will be, not where they are

### Common problems

- Hands tight to the body resulting in the blade of the stick starting in an “open” position, and as the pass is made the stick blade comes under the puck forcing it to wobble and bounce
- Not using wrists – same problem as above
- Not passing the puck hard enough
- Not releasing the puck quickly enough
- Not hitting the intended target

## **BACKHAND PASSING**

Virtually all passes should be made on the forehand and made with the wrists. Occasionally, backhand passes should be made when there is no option to use the forehand, or it is the quicker option.

- Hands need to be away from the body, and the puck needs to be swept across the body, with both hands moving together across the front of the body, and the path of the stick blade should be a straight line, not an arc
- The puck should start on the heel of the stick blade and be released toward the toe. At the end of the pass the back side of the stick blade should be facing upward

## **SNAP PASSING**

The quicker the release the better. The longer the player takes to release the puck, the less likely the play will be made.

- Hands should be away from body, using the wrists to start the stick blade in a “closed” position, about 3-5 inches behind the puck. With the wrists, the player “snaps” the puck, starting with the blade closed, then open, and finishing closed. Movement of stick blade should be about 10-12 inches in total

## **PASS RECEIVING**

To receive a pass with their stick blade, players actually have to “catch” the pass, using their wrists to receive the puck.

- Stick blade should be on the ice presenting a target
- Players should try to receive the puck on the heel of the stick blade, using the wrists to make sure the blade of the stick is “closed” or cupped over the puck, allowing it to “give” 6-8 inches as they catch it for better control.

## Common problems

- Stick blade not on the ice
- No “give” with wrists – poor control
- Not trying to catch puck on the heel – poor control

## **TOUCH PASSING**

Very similar to snap passing except that the puck is received and passed in one motion, without being stopped. Used in situations where the receiver knows what to do with the puck before it is received.

- Puck must be received on heel of stick, as it is the strongest part of the blade, and that is the beginning position to make a pass
- Hands must be away from the body, with wide, strong grip on the stick, using wrists to make sure the blade of the stick is cupped over the puck for control
- Player must react or adjust to the puck before it arrives so that all passes are handled on the forehand side of the blade. If the pass is six inches to the right, the player must adjust by moving to the right before the puck arrives.

### **SAUCER PASSING**

Used when there is not an open passing lane, to get the puck up in the air, over an opponent's stick or body, and onto the stick of a teammate.

- Puck must start on the heel of the blade
- Player uses the wrists to begin with the blade "open", then quickly "opens" it a little more, scooping underneath the puck, spinning it from heel to toe – a mini, open-bladed snap pass
- Spinning action of the puck allows it to land flat, not wobbling and bouncing

### **BOARD PASSING**

Another option when there is no direct passing option, or open passing lane, is to use the boards.

- Most board passes should be on the ice whenever possible, so that they are not wobbling and bouncing when they are received. Sometimes it is necessary to get the puck up in the air to complete the pass, and those passes should be made with a saucer pass to give the puck the best chance of landing flat for the receiver
- The passer must be away from the boards – the angle of the pass off of the boards will be the same angle as the pass made toward the boards

## **MAKING GOOD PASSES**

Every pass should have a purpose. If it doesn't, it shouldn't be made.

- Make the easy play – Great players make the game look easy, because they make the easy play. Trying to pass through a defender or connect on a rink-wide pass is not the easy play
- Make quality passes – Every pass should be on the tape of your teammates stick, and it should also have the proper velocity. Most passes should be firm so they get where they need to go. Some passes need to be softer, when passing to an area, or when passing for a one-time shot. Wobbling, bouncy passes are hard to receive and allow the defenders to adjust.
- Move the puck quickly – The purpose of passing is to catch defenders out of position. If the puck is not moved quickly, they have to adjust.
- Short passes are the best passes – Long rink-wide or two-zone passes, more often than not, do not reach their intended target. If they do, they usually arrive at the same time as an opposing player. Short 15-20 foot diagonal passes work the best. They get there, and more often than not, they give the recipient some time to make a play.

## **GETTING OPEN TO RECEIVE A PASS**

There is no pass if the puck does not reach its' intended recipient.

- Support the puck – Be in proper position. Create a passing lane. The player with the puck should always have a minimum of 2 passing options. Potential pass receivers should know where the puck is, where the opposing players are, and where the open ice is so they can move to it when they get the puck.
- Be ready - Pass receivers need to be ready, with the stick on the ice presenting a target, available to receive a pass at any time. The passer probably won't have time to wait until the receiver is ready, the receiver needs to be ready and in position to receive a pass any time.
- Know what you are going to do – Part of being available and in the right position is making a play once you get the puck. If you don't know your options before you even get the puck on your stick, it is too late.
- Use the width of the ice – Most often, the open ice, is lateral ice, meaning the open teammate is not ahead of you up ice, but across the ice. Using the width of the ice spreads out the defender and creates more openings for the offensive players.

## **SHOOTING**

When shooting the puck, the emphasis should be on shooting it as quickly as possible (quick release), as accurately as possible, and as hard as possible (velocity), in an effort to score more goals.

- Hands should be in a “strong” position on the stick – a little more than the width of the player’s body apart.
- Feet should be set, shoulder width apart, with good knee bend and upper body upright, allowing the player the balance and control to step into the shot with the legs, transferring the weight from the back foot onto the front foot.
- The middle to heel of the blade (strongest part) of blade should be used to shoot the puck
- Hands must be away from the body and wrists must be used to get the proper stick blade action – closed, open, closed – on the puck for better velocity and accuracy. As the stick blade moves from closed (blade cupped over the puck), to open, then closed again, the puck spins from the heel and is released toward the toe. The spinning action allows the player to shoot the puck harder and with more accuracy
- The follow-through should be in the direction of the target – with the blade of the stick finishing in a “closed” position to shoot low, and an “open” position (front of blade up) to shoot high

### Common problems

- Feet not set, minimal knee bend, poor balance, player can not step into the shot
- Hands too close together on stick – weak stick
- Player tries to “flick” or “flip” the puck – quick little wrist movement in an effort to get the puck up in the air – poor velocity and accuracy
- No follow through

## **WRIST SHOT**

- Most accurate shot as puck is on the stick blade for the longest amount of time so the player has better control of where it is going
- Release is not as quick – as puck needs to be drawn back behind the body with the stick blade to generate power

## **BACKHAND SHOT**

- A valuable shot when player is not in a position to get the puck to the forehand
- Puck needs to be on the heel of the stick blade, and released from the middle toward the toe
- Both hands need to sweep across in front of the body as the weight is transferred from the back foot to the front, with the follow-through toward the net
- To shoot the puck low, the blade of the stick should be “closed” on the follow-through, to shoot it high, the blade of the stick should be “opened” to get underneath the puck, and finish open on the follow-through

## **SNAP SHOT**

- Quickest shot in terms of release, but less accurate as the puck is only very briefly on the stick blade
- Mechanics are very similar to wrist shot, except the stick blade is drawn back, but the puck is not
- Using the wrists, the action of the stick blade is “closed, open, closed”, with the player striking down at the ice, 1-2 inches behind the puck, stepping into the shot and following through toward the net
- Velocity is about the same as the wrist shot

## **SLAP SHOT**

- Hardest shot in terms of velocity, but slowest shot to get off because of the length of the wind-up, and hardest shot to control resulting in poor accuracy
- Wind-up should be no higher than the waist, puck should be positioned at about the front foot
- Player should stay down on the puck, with good knee bend, step into the shot and follow through toward the net

## **SHELF SHOT**

- Used in tight to get the puck up over the goalie on rebound situations
- Bottom hand must be slid down the shaft of the stick, blade is “opened” with the wrists
- The puck is scooped with the wrists and bottom hand, upward – spinning from heel toward toe for control
- Follow-through is upward, not toward the net

## **ONE-TIMER**

- Quickest release of all, requiring player to get into position and adjust to the puck before it arrives, getting feet, arms and hands set, to step into the puck, catching it and releasing it all in one motion.
- Puck should be received on the heel of the stick blade, with the blade of the stick closed, hitting down on the ice 1-2 inches behind the puck, with the wrists used to quickly, close, open and close the blade to release the shot

## **SHOOTING ON THE MOVE**

- Being able to shoot the puck in stride, without taking the time to get the feet set, allows the shooter to not “tip off” the goaltender to when the shot is coming, not giving him time to get set
- Players need to carry the puck in a position to shoot, with hands away from the body, and the puck back beside the skates
- The wrists and arms are used to “snap” the puck while striding, which means it will have as much velocity as when the player takes the time to get the feet set and step into the shot, but the quick release will often catch the goalie off-balance

## **REBOUNDING**

- Most goals are scored on rebounds, not on the initial shots
- Players need to know where the shot is coming from and position themselves in an area where the puck would go after a save, not too tight to the net where a rebound would go right by them, and not too far away where they can't get to it. Time the movement to the net with the shot. Rebounders are very easy to defend when standing still
- Be prepared to have to win a "quickness" battle or "strength" battle for the puck on a rebound
- Most goalies go down on the first shot, so the best scoring chance on a rebound is up high

## **SCREENS & DEFLECTIONS**

- Most goalies will stop every puck that they see. Good screening position, facing the shot, with the back to the net, will allow a player to screen the goalie, see the puck to deflect it, and move to the rebound
- Screeners/tippers should not be too tight to the crease where they interfere with the goalie and where any deflection they make will go wide of the goal.
- It is a good idea to start closer to the goalie, then move out toward the shooter, timing it so the deflection comes at about the hash marks. A small tip at the hash mark has a greater change of direction than a small tip tight to the net
- Tippers need to protect their stick blade from opposing defensemen and keep it on the ice, using the heel of the blade to slightly tip the puck. The less stick blade on the puck, the better, so it doesn't slow it down, or cause it to miss the net
- A tripod stance with feet shoulder width apart and stick on the ice in front provides a "strong" position for the tipper and also allows tips from the stick blade to be re-directed through the legs, making it tough for the goalie to pick up
- After the shot/deflection, the tipper should turn around immediately to face the net and look for a rebound

## **WRAPAROUNDS**

- Scoring from below the goal line requires beating the goalie to the post with the puck, either with quickness, or by faking him one way, then going the other
- Player needs to have head up to see where goalie is and decide which way to go
- Puck should be on heel of stick with blade cupped over top for control and strength
- Stick blade and puck needs to get well out over goal line to be able to wrap puck back into net
- Bank shots off of goalies coming across also work

## **ANGLING**

A skating skill where a defending player utilizes proper positioning and timing to take away the middle of the ice, forcing a puck carrier toward the boards, eventually running them out of room, and into a position where they can use their stick, body or both to eliminate them from the play and get the puck. Angling is used by forecheckers in the offensive zone, and defenders in the neutral and defensive zones.

- The defender establishes good defensive position, two stick lengths or less away from the puck carrier, toward the middle of the ice, so that the open ice for the puck carrier is toward the boards
- The defender moves at the same speed, roughly parallel to, and a step behind the puck carrier, allowing them to believe that they can beat them up the boards
- As the puck carrier moves in an arc, the defender takes a short-cut, moving on an angle, to meet the puck carrier along the boards
- The defender can not get too far ahead of the puck carrier, allowing them to cut back behind them and get to the middle of the ice

### Common problems

- Getting too far ahead of puck carrier allowing them to cut back behind to the middle of the ice
- Being too slow and too far away from the puck carrier to cut them off
- Getting too close and behind the puck carrier – not approaching on an angle – and not being able to catch up

## **SWEEP CHECKING**

A form of stick checking used when defender is skating forward along side the puck carrier, angling them toward the boards. It is used by forecheckers in the offensive zone, defensemen in the defensive zone, and defensemen defending the rush, who have been beaten wide and have been forced to pivot and skate forward to defend.

- Defender needs to be in good defensive position, two stick lengths or less from the puck carrier, toward the middle of the ice
- Stick blade needs to be on the ice, taking away passing lanes and space for the puck carrier to make a play
- Once in position to be able to make contact with the puck carrier's stick and the puck, the defender sweeps the stick with one hand with the blade on the ice, to knock the puck off of the puck carrier's stick, then battles for the loose puck

## **POKE CHECKING**

A form of stick checking used when defender is skating backward defending a puck carrier, or forward toward the puck carrier. It is used by forecheckers in the offensive zone, defensemen in the defensive zone, and defensemen defending the rush.

- Defender needs to be in good defensive position, two stick lengths or less from the puck carrier
- Stick blade needs to be on the ice, taking away passing lanes and space for the puck carrier to make a play
- Once in position to be able to make contact with the puck carrier's stick and the puck, the defender makes a little poke diagonally forward to the left or right, to try to knock the puck free
- The defender needs to play with "controlled aggression", luring the puck carrier close enough to be able to quickly, with one hand, poke the puck free. Large sweeping movements, or lunging should be avoided, as a swing and a miss means the defender will be beaten and out of the play.

## **STICK LIFTING**

At times, the best defensive play is to lift the puck carrier's stick and simply take the puck. This requires that the defender be in good position, be strong on the skates, strong on the stick, and quick to "tap" the stick up, and "take" the puck. It is used when pursuing from behind, and the puck carrier leaves the puck exposed, or in any 1 on 1 battle for the puck.

- Defender needs to have two hands on the stick in a position of strength and be strong on the skates with good balance
- Defender needs to slip stick underneath puck carrier's stick as close to the ice as possible – quickly tapping it upward (it only needs to be high enough to get the puck), and quickly taking the puck away

## **BODY CHECKING**

While effective checking can be accomplished through proper positioning and stick usage, body checking adds another dimension to the game, because a defender can use his body to separate the puck from the puck carrier, then beat that player back into the play, creating a brief manpower advantage for his team. In the offensive zone, effective body contact can lead to 2 on 1 opportunities and scoring chances, while in the defensive zone it can lead to a turnover of the puck and quick transition up the ice.

- Body checking requires good decision-making skills. There is definitely a right time and place to make body contact. If a checker tries to make a hit and misses, or falls down, he is giving the other team the advantage that he is trying to create by body checking.
- Most body contact occurs along the boards, because the defensive player has angled the puck carrier into a position where his options are limited and he is running out of space and time.
- Occasionally, there is a good opportunity for body contact in open ice, but usually only if the puck carrier has his head down or is looking back for a pass. Otherwise, a body check in open ice is very easily avoided, and more often than not the checker takes himself out of the play, not the puck carrier.
- To make effective body contact, a checker needs to be strong on the skates, establishing a good base with the feet shoulder width apart, good knee bend and the upper body upright.
- Checker should be on the inside edges of the skates because leaning too far on the outside edges of the skates means that the player is relying on the opposing player to hold him up, and is no longer in a strong position
- To make contact in open ice, the checker should turn the upper body so that the shoulder makes contact with the chest area of the puck carrier

### Common problems

- Bending over too far forward at the waist – poor balance
- Feet together and legs straight – no strength
- Making contact with gloves, elbows or stick – penalty
- Not using legs to “step into” the check

## **SHOULDER TO SHOULDER CONTACT MOVING FORWARD**

- Most contact should be made shoulder to shoulder while moving forward along the boards. Arms should be extended out in front of the body, with hands apart on the stick (bottom hand more than halfway down)
- Weight should be transferred from the outside skate to the inside skate to “step into “ the check. Power is created with the legs, contact is made with the shoulder
- As contact is made, the objective is to get the puck, or let a teammate get the puck, then beat the player back into the play creating an advantage for your team.

## **SHOULDER TO CHEST CONTACT MOVING BACKWARD**

- When skating backward, a checker should angle the puck carrier toward the boards, running him out of space, with stick on the ice on the inside of the player, to deter him from cutting back to the middle
- Contact is made with the shoulder to the puck carrier's chest, stepping into the check off of the inside edge of the inside skate.
- Win the battle for the puck and beat the opponent back into the play

## **HIP CHECKING**

- Very similar to shoulder to chest contact while moving backward, except instead of stepping into the check and making contact with the shoulder, at the last second the checker rotates the body and bends at the waist, so that the inside hip makes contact with the puck carrier's waist area.
- Effective method of body contact for smaller players when approaching bigger players along the boards

## **RECEIVING A CHECK**

Obviously, the best thing to do is to keep your head up and avoid checks, but that is not always possible, so it is important for players to learn how to receive a check, especially along the boards.

- Players should never put themselves into a dangerous position with their backs to the play and their face to the boards. When retrieving the puck off of the boards, it is a good idea to decide which way to go first, then turn before picking up the puck, so if you do get hit, you get hit from the side, not from behind.
- If hit from behind, there really is no way to protect yourself other than getting your arms up. If that isn't possible, it is best to keep the head up, rather than duck and take the force of the blow on the top of the head, and risk serious injury to the spinal cord.
- In receiving a check from the side, a player can use the legs to absorb the check by keeping his feet wide apart (shoulder width) and knees bent to be in a strong position. When contact is made at the shoulder level, he can use his legs (hip) to absorb the check along the boards first, before the shoulders are driven into the boards.
- Injuries occur when the shoulders, upper body and head are driven into the boards first (by the shoulder of the opposing player) and there is no solid base with the legs of the player being checked

### Common problems

- Feet together and legs straight – no strength on skates
- Not using legs (hip) to absorb the check first, before the upper body is driven into the boards
- Ducking and getting head driven into the top of the boards
- Turning the upper body to receive the check with the chest
- Slowing down and not driving through the check