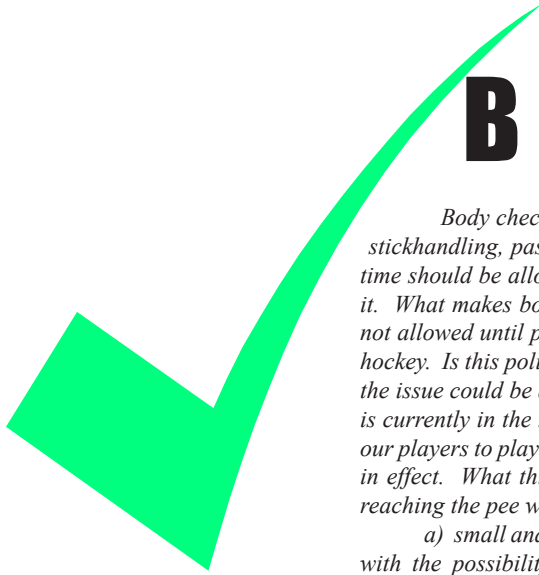


# BODYCHECKING



“At the speed and quickness of the game of hockey, all it takes is a split second of a manpower advantage to create a scoring chance.”

*Body checking is a skill, not unlike skating, stickhandling, passing and shooting, and plenty of time should be allocated to learning and improving it. What makes body checking different is that it is not allowed until players reach the pee wee level of hockey. Is this policy correct? The pros and cons of the issue could be argued all day. The fact is that it is currently in the rulebook and we need to prepare our players to play under the rules that are currently in effect. What this policy has created are players reaching the pee wee level who are either:*

*a) small and/or scared as they are confronted with the possibility of being “fair game” for the first time*

*or*

*b) large and/or aggressive who become like an unleashed dog whose sole focus is to attack and “kill” an opponent with no thought to their positioning or what becomes of the puck.*

*The reality of introducing checking into the game at the pee wee level is that it has an effect, either positively or negatively on every player. Some skilled players have their effectiveness reduced by the physical contact or even by the threat of physical contact while some lesser skilled players become more valuable to their teams by learning to use their bodies effectively and in a positive manner.*

*As coaches, our goal and purpose is to teach players why, who, where, when and how to use our bodies effectively.*

## **Why we body check**

Simply to eliminate the puck carrying opponent from the play. The objective is to use the body to knock an opponent off of the puck creating a turnover, and for a brief moment, giving your team a manpower advantage by beating the “checked” player back into the play. At the speed and quickness of the game of hockey, all it takes is a split second of a manpower advantage to create a scoring chance.

## **Who we body check**

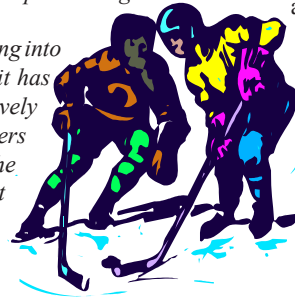
Only a player who is carrying the puck or has just gotten rid of the puck. We check a puck carrier to eliminate him from the play and create a turnover. We check a player who has just gotten rid of the puck to eliminate him from the play so he can't help his team out either offensively or defensively.

## **Where we body check**

Any place on the ice, although most body checking occurs along the boards. Open-ice body checking happens, but not as often, because the puck carrier has a greater chance of avoiding a check unless he has his head down or is looking back for a “suicide” or what has now become a “Kevorkian” pass. By teaching your players the concept of “angling” a puck carrier toward the boards (taking away the middle of the ice), they reduce his options and his time and space, eventually allowing contact to be made. “Angling” is a concept that is sometimes hard to grasp and requires a sense of timing and positioning which only comes through plenty of practice time.

## **When we body check**

We body check at all times of the game when it is advantageous to our team. Sometimes, when killing penalties, or confronted with an outnumbered attack by the opposition, it is not a good time to “take ourselves” out of the play by taking the puck carrier out of the play. In this situation, we usually have the responsibility of “playing” two opponents and have to be aware of limiting as many of their options as possible.



## **How we body check**

The key to body checking is “being ready” physically to make contact.

All power and strength for the body check comes from the legs. Legs should be apart creating a wider base for stability with knees bent for balance. The most common problem among young body checkers is that they try to use their upper body with straight legs, resulting in a penalty, or with them falling down and effectively taking themselves out of the play.

Arms and stick should be down in position to help control the puck carrier and to quickly retrieve the puck when it becomes free. Contact is made with the shoulder. If skating in the same direction as the puck carrier (which is the case in most situations when “angling” the puck carrier toward the boards) the arms should be out in front of the puck carrier to impede his forward progress. The legs, or lower body, would be even with or behind the puck carriers legs to control his lower body and not allow him a “rear” escape from being pinned against the boards.

After the contact, the objective is to beat the opponent back into the play.