

Passing

*Passing the puck is by far the most important individual skill to develop with your players. Whether it is a mite team or a pro team, one fact is constant – **the puck moves faster than any player can.** If you can instill that belief in your team, your players will learn to work with one another unselfishly, you will have great team unity, everyone will feel a part of it, and you will be successful. Passing is a progressive skill that requires building on the basics as the experience level of the players and the speed of the game increases. Players need to know why they should pass the puck. The answer is always “to get it to a teammate who is in a better position.” Whether it is in the offensive zone to score a goal or in the defensive zone to break out, it is always “getting it to a teammate who is in a better position.” The following is the sequence in which these passing related skills should be taught as players move up through the ranks.*

FOREHAND AND BACKHAND STATIONARY PASSING (SWEEP PASSING)

Players should be about two stick lengths (at most) apart, standing shoulder to shoulder (not with toes facing each other – this most effectively simulates passing and receiving a pass while moving up the ice – they need to sweep the puck across the front of their bodies). As always, they should be in a good “ready position” with their knees bent, head up and stick on the ice in front of them.

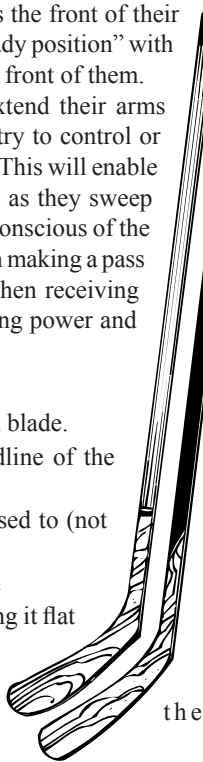
Inexperienced players need to learn to extend their arms away from their bodies to either side, and not try to control or pass the puck with their arms tight to their sides. This will enable them to move their stick in a straight-line path as they sweep the puck across their bodies. Players should be conscious of the “midline” (starting puck behind the midline when making a pass and starting the stick in front of the midline when receiving a pass), as it is extremely important in generating power and control of the puck.

PASSING

- Puck should start on the heel of the stick blade.
- Stick blade should start behind the midline of the body.
- Head up looking at the target being passed to (not the puck).
- Sweep puck across the front of the body.
- Puck should spin from heel to toe, keeping it flat on the ice
- Concentrate on the target.
- Follow-through in the direction of the target with the stick.

RECEIVING

- Stick blade should be on the ice presenting a target out in front of the midline.
- Stick blade should “give” as the puck meets the blade, cushioning the puck back behind the midline.
- Roll the wrists and cup the blade of the stick over the puck for control.



PASSING AND RECEIVING WHILE MOVING

The “**midline principle**” is the most important aspect of making a pass and receiving a pass while moving. When making a pass, the puck must be brought back behind the midline to generate power and control on the pass. Otherwise, the puck will be “shoveled” with little power and poor control – especially on the backhand.

The puck must be cushioned back behind the midline when receiving to maintain control while moving forward. If not, the player will continue to move forward, while the puck will hit his stick and stop.

More advanced players should be concentrating on **not breaking stride** as they receive the puck and in angling their skate blades to **deflect poor passes up to their stick using their skates.**

TOUCH PASSING

Touch passing can only be done on the forehand and should be used to receive and pass the puck all in one motion. It can be used most effectively in a “give and go” situation where the passing distance is very short (i.e. the defenseman comes around the net and passes to the left winger who is being pressured, so the winger touch passes the puck back to the defenseman who continues up the ice).

- The bottom hand should be low on the shaft and the player should bear down, putting plenty of weight on his/her hand.
- The blade of the stick should be cupped or closed over the puck for better control as the puck meets the stick.
- The puck should be touch-passed on the heel of the stick whenever possible (this is the strongest part of the blade and it will eliminate “bouncing”).
- As the puck meets the stick, the player pushes through with the bottom hand while pulling back with the top hand, quickly “opening and closing” the blade of the stick.
- The puck spins off the stick from heel to toe, keeping it flat on the ice.

FLIP OR SAUCER PASSING

Flip passing is used when a player needs to get the puck up in the air over an opponent’s stick or another object. The most important aspect of the pass is that the puck lands flat on the ice so the intended receiver easily controls it. This is again achieved by the passer spinning the puck off his/her stick blade from heel to toe, so that the puck is essentially like a Frisbee as it moves through the air, the spinning movement creating friction as the puck meets the ice, eliminating bouncing.

- Similar to touch passing in that the player pushes through with the bottom hand while pulling back with the top hand to “open” the stick blade, scooping the puck with the heel of the stick blade.
- Keep the blade of the stick “open” as the puck spins off the heel to the toe.
- This requires plenty of practice to develop a “touch.”