



# Forward to Backward and Backward to Forward Pivoting

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*Never take your eyes off of the puck. It is something we try to drill into our players over and over. To do it requires that they are able to stop, start, turn and pivot in both directions. The split second it takes to recover from turning or pivoting the wrong way is often all it takes for the puck to end up in your team's net. Most players learn these skills one way (either to the left or right) and rely on that ability to get by. After all it is human nature to do what comes easiest to us. As coaches we need to make sure players are performing these skills both ways, especially to their weaker side. Don't let your players take the easy way out. Demand that they improve upon their weaknesses. For sure, it will show up on the scoreboard some game.*

*Pivoting from backward to forward and forward to backward while maintaining balance and speed are crucial skills for defensemen, as well as forwards. The following are some pointers for recognizing weaknesses and improving your team's transitional skating abilities.*

## Balance and Control

As with all areas of skating, the more knee bend the better for balance and more, importantly, for power. While pivoting, players have good knee bend with the upper body upright, weight over the skates. A common problem is for players to bend forward at the waist with their weight on the toes of the skates causing them to lose their balance. Or they lean keep their legs too straight, with their weight back on their heels, causing them to lose their balance backwards. Feet should be about shoulders' width apart for stability with the stick on the ice under control.

## Rotate Upper Body

In either direction, backward to forward or forward to backward, the upper body needs to work with the lower body. The head should turn first with the shoulders rotating in the direction of the pivot for proper balance and control. It is important to keep the stick down on the ice and under control. One of the biggest reasons

players lose their balance is they have their stick out of control and their shoulders don't open in the direction of the turn.

## Forward to Backward

While keeping the body under control with weight over the skates, players need to lift their heels (shift the point where the skate blade touches the ice up to the toes) while making the turn and then shift it back to the middle of the blade again.

## Backward to Forward

In turning from backward to forward, players need to stride from an inside edge to an inside edge. When turning to the left they rotate the upper body and hips to the left while pushing off the inside edge of the right skate and landing on the inside edge of the left skate. A very common problem in this pivot is players want to cross over, rather than going from inside edge to inside edge. This puts them at a disadvantage when they are defending an onrushing puck carrier who fakes one way and cuts back the other. Once the defender crosses his feet, he is unable to recover back the other direction.

## Don't Break Stride

In completing the pivot in either manner, backward to forward or forward to backward, it is important to keep striding to maintain speed. That is one reason why knee bend is so critical throughout the maneuver – to be in a position to stride as soon as the skate hits the ice. The split second it takes to recover from missing a stride is the difference between being good players and being great players.

## END ZONE SCRIMMAGE

One way to work with your players in "below the goal line" situation that is also a great deal of fun for them is an end zone scrimmage.

You can have two scrimmages going at the same time, one in each end of the ice with resting players in the neutral zone. Move the net out about 15 feet inside the blue line so the goalie faces the end of the rink. Place three players from each team in the end zone and place two players on the face off dots in the neutral zone. The three players in the end zone play three on three hockey, one team trying to score and one defending. If the defending team gains possession of the puck, they must pass it outside the blue line to one of the players on the face off dot. Once they receive a pass back, they become the offensive team. The players on the dots can pass the puck back and forth between them (making the goalie move from side to side and making the defenders adjust their positioning) before returning it to the end zone.

