

Quick Puck Movement

Team speed is an essential ingredient in the formula for any winning team. The speed with which players can attack on offense and get into position to defend on defense is very important. Players who have good top end speed are important, as are those who have good quickness and can win those short races to the puck or to an opening on the ice.

But more importantly, it is advantageous to have good team speed – with the puck. No matter how fast we are, the puck can always move faster. That is why it is essential that each player is able to pass and receive while moving – not breaking stride – as well as touch pass the puck to move it quickly before defenders can react and get into position.

Good passes are crisp and clean, flat on the ice and on the tape of the intended recipient. The fraction of the second that it takes a player to control a bobbling pass or kick it up from his skates to his stick, or the speed a player loses while having to slow down to receive a poor pass – is the difference between a good pass and a poor pass – the difference between getting out of your own zone right away or 30 seconds from now – the difference between getting a good scoring chance or turning the puck over.



Snap Passes

On the forehand, players are able to snap the puck when passing it because of their ability to use their wrists. This is virtually impossible on the backhand – the pass becomes more of a slap pass which usually results in poor control. On the backhand it is better to rely on the sweep backhand pass for better accuracy and control. But on the forehand, players should be able to use their wrists only to snap the puck. To do this, players should focus on the following:

- The puck should start on the heel of the stick and be released off of the middle-to-toe area of the blade. This will cause a spin on the puck – keeping it flat on the ice resulting in better control.
- The blade of the stick should be “closed” over the puck at the beginning of the pass – while pushing through with the bottom hand and pulling back with the top hand (snapping the wrists) the blade of the stick “opens” and then quickly “closes” again on the follow-through (resulting in the spin on the puck). If the blade of the stick is not “closed” at the beginning and end of the pass – the puck will bounce and wobble.
- The follow-through should result in toe of the stick blade pointing in the direction of the intended target with the front of the blade down (closed).

Work with your players on snapping the puck while their feet are moving (striding – not coasting). It requires coordination to be able to snap the puck with your wrists while continuing to stride with your legs. However, this is an essential part of quick puck movement. Having to slow down to make a pass often results in the pass not even being made – because the puck carrier gets caught or checked by an opposing player.

Touch Passing

The technique for touch passing is very similar to that of snap passing. However, with a touch pass – the player never really has possession of the puck – he receives the pass and makes the pass all in one motion. It is essential that touch passing be done on the heel of the blade. The stick is much stronger here and will result in better control. Trying to touch pass off of the toe of the stick blade where there is more flex will result in a bouncing wobbly puck. The puck should again be spun from heel to toe to keep it flat on the ice. Keeping the stick blade closed at the beginning and end of the pass is important in keeping the pass on the ice.

React to the Puck – One important element of touch passing is that players need to react to the puck – meaning they need to position their bodies before the puck gets to them so that they can touch pass the puck on the forehand. Passes don’t always arrive exactly where you want them – and to receive and make a pass all in one motion – players need to position themselves to do that as the puck is heading toward them. For example, if a lefthanded defenseman is playing the point in the offensive zone and he receives a pass back to him which is to his right – rather than receiving the pass on the backhand – then moving the puck into a position to pass it – he should move to his right before the puck gets to him so he can receive the puck and make the pass in one motion.

This is especially critical on the power play where quick puck movement is essential in getting good scoring chances.

Saucer Passing

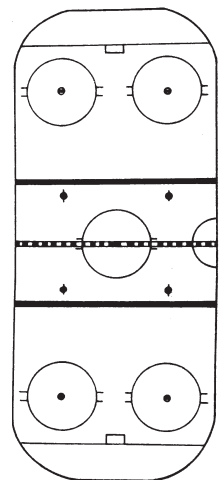
Also caused flip passing – which is really not an accurate description. Saucer passing is utilized when trying to get the puck up in the

air over a defenders stick or body. The key is to get the puck to land flat on the ice. To just flip the puck and have it land bouncing and wobbling would really defeat the purpose of making the pass. The technique is very similar to snap passing – starting with the puck on the heel and spinning it to release it off of the toe by snapping the wrists. The difference is that the blade of the stick should be open at the beginning and end of the pass. This allows the stick blade to almost “scoop” the puck (coming underneath it) to get it up in the air – but it has to be spun from the heel to the toe to have it land flat.

Quick Puck Movement Drills

Touch Pass 2 on 0

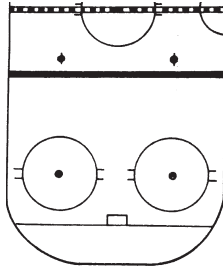
Have four players spread out around the center ice circle and divide the remaining players equally in all four corners of the ice. On the whistle, X1 and X2 begin with X1 passing the puck to one of the players at center. While X1 and X2 move up and around center, the players in the middle touch pass the puck around until they touch pass it back to X1 and X2 for a 2 on 0. X1 and X2 should also touch pass the puck between them and take a one-time shot. The emphasis is on not handling the puck, quick puck movement, and adjusting to the puck before it gets to you. For variety and to work on stopping – X1 and



X2 can go straight up the ice and stop on the face-off dot outside the blue line before moving straight back up the ice to receive their pass back.

L Drill

Half ice drill with players spread out as shown. On the whistle, X passes a puck to A who touch passes it to B who moves it to C who then touch passes it to X who has timed his movement with the flow of the puck to arrive at the slot to one-time a shot at the net. A follows in for the rebound if there is one and then moves to the end of the line. X replaces C who moves to B's spot. B moves to replace A and the drill is repeated.



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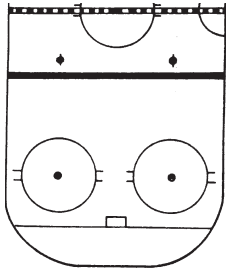


Figure 8 Passing

Divide players in groups of three and spread them out around the ice. Two players stand stationary about 15 feet apart. The third player skates a figure 8 around the two stationary players while the three of them touch pass the puck continually. The puck

should not stop or be held by any of the players and can move to anyone at any time.