

The importance of tight turns

Turning sharply, both with and without the puck, is an essential skill for all players at all levels. Tight turns, or glide turns, or used often on the ice in many different situations. When changing direction, sometimes rather than stopping and starting, it is better to make a sharp, glide turn, maintaining speed and then accelerating out of the turn. Puck carriers, in many different situations and many different areas of the ice, need to be able to turn sharply with the puck to lose a checker who is in “hot pursuit” directly on their heels.

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FOOT POSITIONING

Feet should be approximately shoulder width apart and aligned in a heel-toe relationship, with the inside foot being the lead foot and the outside foot the trailer. Both ankles need to be bent in order to get on the outside edge of the inside skate and the inside edge of the outside skate.

BODY POSITIONING

The upper body should be upright with the player bending at the knees, the ankles and the hips. The greater the knee bend, the better, for balance purposes and for accelerating into a stride in coming out of the turn. Players should not bend forward at the waist or lean into the turn or they will lose their balance. The shoulders should be parallel to the ice and the upper body should be rotated in the direction of the turn.

STICK POSITIONING

The player’s stick should be the first thing to turn, and should lead the player into rotating the shoulders and upper body in the direction of the turn. For non-puck carrying players, they should have one hand on their stick and throw the stick completely around in the direction of the turn. For example, left-handed players turning to their right

would completely rotate the stick and upper body to the right, and the lower body would follow.

WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION

The body weight should be centered over the skates, (not leaning into the turn) and as the turn is being made the weight should be shifted back to the heels of the skates and then forward again as the turn is completed.

TURNING WITH THE PUCK

Turning the puck is an essential skill to create time and space and evade checkers. Turning with the puck to the **backhand side** is much easier for players to master than turning to the forehand side, simply because their stick is naturally on that side of their body. For example a left-handed player turning to his left, can easily maneuver the puck to that side of the body on the backhand side of the stick. The puck should be controlled on the heel of the stick with the blade of the stick “cupped”, or “closed” over the puck for the best control. Pucks in the middle or close to the end of the stick will be lost off of the toe during the turn, especially on the backhand with a curved stick. In turning, the puck should be brought from in front of the body quickly to the backhand side, with the skates following in the path of the puck. This can be done quickly, and easily, by bringing the lower hand (and the stick blade) swiftly to the backhand side.

Turning to the **forehand side** is a little tougher to master as it requires a little more complex maneuvering with the hands and wrists to get the stick blade and puck to the forehand side of the body. For example, a left-handed player turning to his right, would have to quickly get the puck from in front of his body to the right side of his body to turn sharply. Again, the puck needs to be controlled on the heel of the stick blade with the blade of the stick “closed” or “cupped” over it. The player needs to keep the top hand in front of the body, and bring the bottom hand (and stick blade) quickly to the forehand side. The result is that the player’s hands are actually crossed during the turn, with the bottom arm over the top and arm. The puck turns first, with the skates following in it’s path.