



Coaching Junior Hockey

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Getting Started:

Flat side of the stick - refer to this as the **STRONG** side, when the stick is inverted it's called **REVERSE**.

The **left hand** does all the work in turning the stick, the right hand does not rotate the stick. Left handed children often find hockey easier to learn because it really is a left handed sport!

Only the flat side of the stick is used to play the ball - because this creates a 'safe side' for children to tackle each other.

There is no need to teach children to hit a hockey ball, it is far safer and more productive to **teach Push, Slap and Sweep passes only**

Players should stay on their feet at all times - for safety reasons.

In general in hockey passes should be made to 12, 3, 6 & 9 o'clock, players run diagonally - this is the opposite to football!

Correct Grip:

Left hand - grips the top of the stick approx 2 cms down from the top. **They should be able to see the top of their hand and not their finger tips.** To rotate the stick into the reverse position, the Left hand rotates anticlockwise.



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If children can't rotate the stick, their left hand is in the wrong position - they can see their fingers when they grip the handle.

Right hand - holds the stick at the bottom of the taped section. The **right hand provides stability and power** - it does not turn the stick.

If the right hand is used to turn onto the reverse, it drops the right shoulder and the child's head down into the area where the sticks are!

Stopping the Ball:

Knees bent but head high
Hands apart
Stick flatter to the ground
Left foot in front of right foot

Push Passing:

Player has to turn 90' clockwise, so their **LEFT shoulder** points to the target
Hands apart, knees bent, ball pushed toward target keeping stick in contact with the ball
Players should **point the end of the stick after the ball**, this helps accuracy, power and is safer as it prevents the stick being lifted.

Slap Pass:

The set up is the same as the push pass, the key being hands are apart as for the push pass but the ball is slap hit towards the target.
This is a safer form of hitting, **the length of the swing to hit the ball is short and the stick is kept low.**

Sweep

This pass is made by sweeping the whole length of the stick along the ground
The hands are at the top of the stick and power is generated by the swing of the wrists.

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Dribbling with the Ball

Ball is placed approx 40-50cm in front and at about 2 o'clock to the right foot.

Players need to hold the ball away from them in order that they can turn easily. Most children run with the ball too close to their feet and an upright stick.

To stop the ball whilst dribbling, the player needs to hop the stick over in front of the ball having twisted the stick into reverse.

Tackling

The safe place to tackle is facing an oncoming player, right shoulder to right shoulder. **All tackles from behind leave the tackler open to injury from a swinging stick.**

Playing Matches - Keep the teams small, 4x4 or 3x3 otherwise it becomes herd ball.

Best practice is for the following rules:

No tackling – but players must pass the ball after a few seconds. (for better players give them less time, and less confident players have more time)

Passes can be intercepted though.

No hitting, push passing only.

Use a shooting zone to prevent 'hit and hope' hockey.

You can introduce rules to improve the game by dictating a min number of passes before a shot is made.

Or make a player change direction if they receive a pass (prevents players only running toward the opposition goal)

Or you can state that passes can only be made in a number sequence, 1 to 2 to 3 to 4 etc – this is a good but difficult exercise. It does encourage everyone to think about where they are or should be on a pitch, and make players look up and think before passing – but it is hard for the children to pick up quickly.

Or you can stipulate that no one can run with the ball, this prevents the best players taking over, players can run off the ball, but this does encourage good passing hockey. It is hard for children to grasp initially.

If you have larger teams, a good tip is to create zones, as in netball, players have to stay in their zones but can pass to teammates in other zones. This does prevent herd ball, and should encourage more passing, but it can be a little tricky to get going.

If players are struggling to score goals, then goals can be awarded for a number of consecutive passes.

Good Beginner Games and Exercises

Start and stop. Ball at 2 o'clock to right foot
Ball about 50cm in front of player
Stick in contact with ball at all times – no tapping
2 hands on stick, LH at top, RH at end of grip

To stop a ball, hop the stick over the ball in front, invert stick by rotating LEFT hand only.

Colour Corners. Different colour cones area in a large square.

Players must move with ball all the times, avoiding each other, the stick is in contact with the ball.

On call they run to the corner of the colour called out.

If ball not stopped in that zone – they're out

Last 2 players into the corner are eliminated

For less confident players, you can call the colour nearest to them.

Reset exercise after 4-5 calls. This encourages, vision, ball control, changing direction, and dribbling skills.

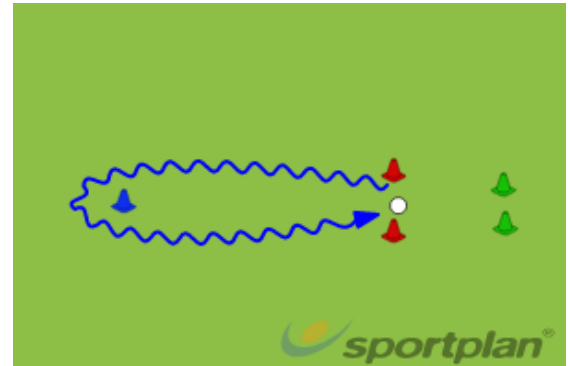


Relay Race. Teams 5-6 players.

Ball starts and must be stopped in-between 2 cones (gate).
Player 1 runs to gate, collects ball, runs to second cone approx 10m away, circles it **ANTI** clockwise, runs back, stops ball in gate, crosses line then player 2 goes.

Using a stopping gate improves ball control and prevents balls being hit back to next person to 'get ahead'

To make it harder, run **CLOCK** wise round cone or add some extra cones to dribble round.



Left & Right Players learn to rotate the stick to move ball R-L and L-R.

KEY POINTS: LEFT hand does all the rotation, RH should not twist (left handers will find this easier to do) RH must allow the stick to swivel, this is important as it improves ball control, enables players to move the ball better, and prevents their shoulders and heads from being dropped too close to sticks

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Secondly, Stance, legs are hip width apart, bottom low, body up, hips move left to right it's NOT an upper body and shoulders twist.

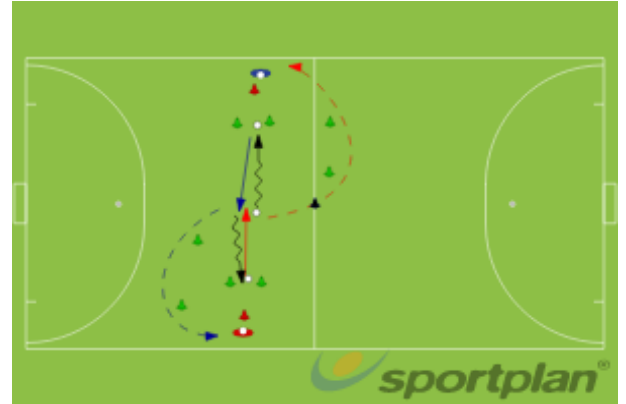
If twisting is a problem, make player lift the foot up as they move the ball, encourages the correct weight shift.

Passing. This can be done in 4's or 6's.

Players stand 8-10 m apart 2 or 3 players at each end. Player 1 has ball dribbles to middle, passes to person at other end.

Then player 1 follows the pass and joins the team at that end, player 2 runs to mid point passes to player 3 and follows pass etc.

Key Points: Players need to turn so that their Left shoulder points at the player to pass to. Pass is pushed and make players point the end of the stick toward to person after passing, this improves accuracy, power and prevents wild sticks!



To make it harder, you can make distance longer and or add cones for the pass to go through before reaching player 2.

Shooting. They all love shooting!

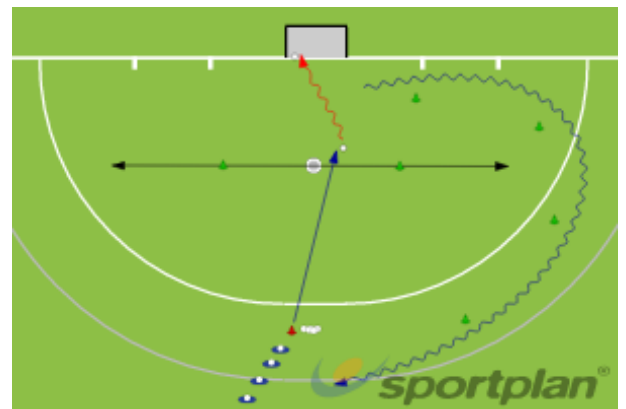
Create a shooting line, so shot can't be made before crossing it.

Players dribble with ball to shooting line, turns left shoulder towards the goal and pushes the ball in. No wild hits.

Key points: After shot, leave the ball, run away round a 'safety' cone back to the queue. Ball collect once all balls used up it's quicker and safer. Look for players to keep moving while turning their bodies to shoot.

Try to encourage turn before the shooting line so they can shoot straight after crossing it.

Keep the ball on their stick at all times discourage tap and chase style dribbling.



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Indian Dribbling. Run round cones to using the reverse and strong side of the sticks.

Lengthen the distance between cones to make it easier.

Key points. This is close control work, the LEFT hand does all the turning of the stick

Ensure the ball is away from their feet, (it's easier to control the ball) and ball stays in contact at all times.

Better players can almost run in a straight line over the cones but moving the ball L& R round them so they are always running forwards. Less confident players will tend to do big circles round the cones.



Mine-field hockey. This is a shooting and close control exercise

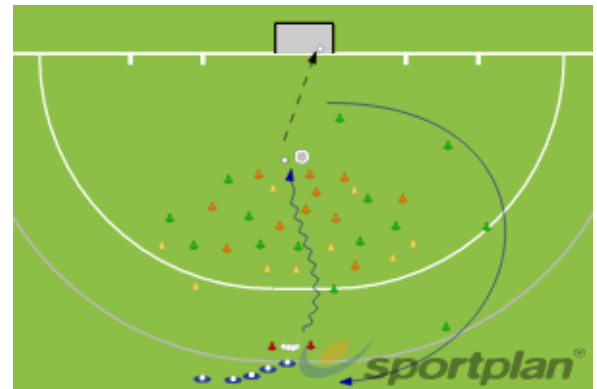
Place cones randomly outside the shooting circle, more cones closer together is more difficult, but try to ensure there are no straight routes through.

Player runs through the cones avoiding hitting any (or they are blown up and have to rejoin the queue). If they get through unscathed, they can shoot.

Key points, look for **LEFT hand turning the stick** to reverse and strong side.

Player's feet and bodies should turn to help keep the ball under control

On shooting, the **Left shoulder should point toward the goal and the stick to point after the ball to prevent wild swings.**



Player leaves ball and returns to queue having run away and back round from the shooting area.

Aim is to get players moving swiftly through the cones and shooting without having to stop the ball or lose control of it. No tap and chase.

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No entry zones.

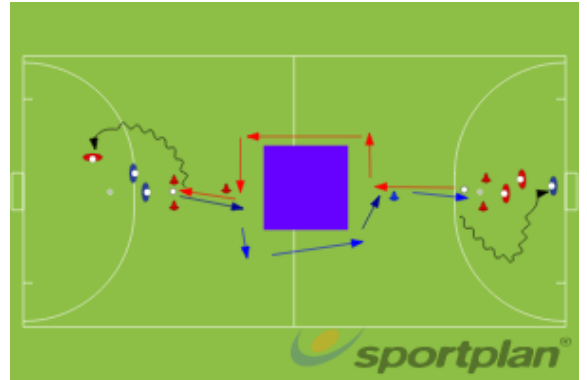
Similar to the passing exercise with the gates, but this time there is a no entry zone in the middle, so players have to run round to the left or the right, with the ball and then pass to their team mate at the other end.

Key points: Players have to anticipate when to turn and move. Either way at some point they will need to use a reverse stick to go round the no entry area either at the beginning or the end as they have to go through an exit gate before passing the ball to the next in line.

To make it harder, once players go through the exit gate the pass can also be made through another set of cones further away to get to player 2 at the other end.

The player then follows the pass and joins the end of player 2's queue.

This exercise develops close control, turning skills and visual awareness.



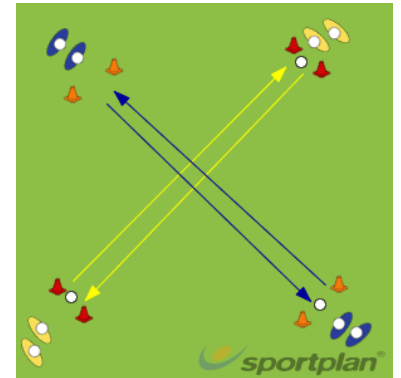
Cross over relays.

In a square, 2 players in each corner, aim to dribble diagonally across the square, at the same time as another player dribbles across diagonally from the other corner.

The aim is for both players to run to the middle at the same time, so they have to avoid each other in getting across their diagonal.

Players have to be in control of their ball, no tap and chase. Players must look up to avoid collisions, move and keep ball under control.

On reaching the other side of the square, the ball must be stopped in the gate before the next player can run across.



This is supposed to be a fast moving exercise, with players learning to time runs to avoid others and control the ball well to again avoid bumping into anyone.

It does require some skill to do this exercise well, timing of runs and being able to look up whilst moving with the ball.

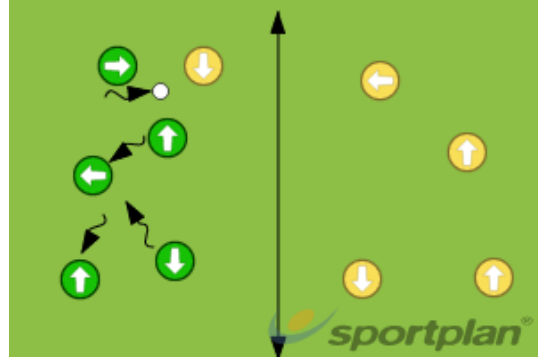
Kabaddi

If players are not ready for a match environment, then Kabaddi is a great game that eliminates tackling

2 teams between 4-7 players per side. Each team stays in their own half.

Team 1 has the ball and passes amongst themselves in their area.
A goal is scored if a min of 5 passes are made.
This can be increased as they improve.

Team 2 send 1 poacher in, to steal the ball.
If they get the ball, it is immediately sent to team 2's half and they try to pass a min of 5 passes, but Team 1 sends their poacher in.



Rules:

Tackling is not allowed

Poaching a ball can ONLY happen by
intercepting a pass,
the ball going out of play
or the player holds onto the ball for 5 seconds (this prevents better players from dominating the passing).

If a goal is scored, a new poacher is sent in to replace the 1st poacher.

If the poaching team cannot poach the ball, you can increase the number of poachers for example.

This is a fast moving game but competitive game, but it eliminates the dangers of inexperienced tackling, so is much easier to control.

It helps develop all key hockey skills in addition children can referee this game on their own.

For more information and resources on Quicksticks, the England Hockey website for is

<http://www.playquicksticks.co.uk/how-to-play/rules-of-quicksticks/>

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