



# TECHNICAL

*Puck Control I*



REVISED 2/19



## OBJECTIVES

- To help coaches understand the various puck control skills used in ice hockey
- To introduce the skills and teach them in sequence
- To explain the key elements in all of the skills

## INTRODUCTION

Until players learn to control the puck, their ability to shoot, pass and receive the puck are severely limited.

There are different stages of developing the skills of puck control. Youth ice hockey coaches must continue to pay special attention to the development of this and other fundamental skills during the early years of a player's growth and development.

## FUNDAMENTALS OF PUCK CONTROL

To be a good puckhandler, it is essential that the player understands the importance of stick selection, stick length, grip, and basic stance.

### Length of Stick

When standing on skates, the stick should be no longer than just under the chin and no shorter than the top of the shoulders.



Figure 13-1. Proper length of stick.

### Size of Shaft

It is very important that the fingers can grip around the shaft of the stick. Too many players start using an adult stick too early and have a difficult time controlling the stick. 12U and younger players should use a junior shaft stick or have the shaft shaved down for a comfortable fit to their hand.

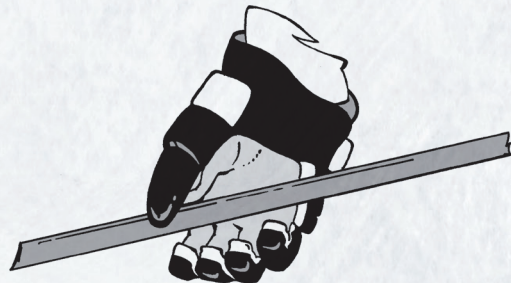


Figure 13-2. Determining the size of the shaft.

### Blade of Stick

The length of the blade must be small enough for the youth player to control the puck without having to fight the length and weight of the stick blade.

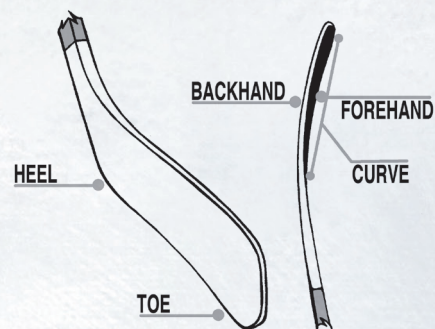


Figure 13-3. Blade of the stick.



### Lie of Stick

Skating style of a youth ice hockey player determines the lie of the stick. If a youth player is erect from the waist up, it requires a higher number lie. If the youth player is more bent over at the waist, it requires a lower number lie.

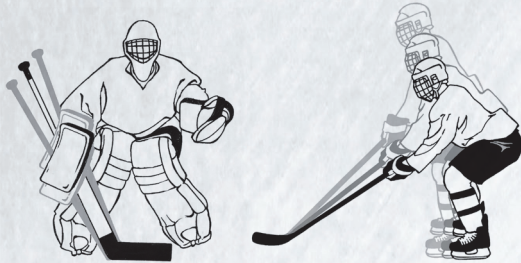


Figure 13-4. *Lie of the stick.*

### Grip of Stick

One of the most important components of puck control is the positioning of the hands on the stick. The hands should be a “glove length” apart on the stick (6-12 inches). The grip is correct if the player can look down at the stick and see a “V” formed by the thumb and forefinger of each hand on the top side of the shaft.

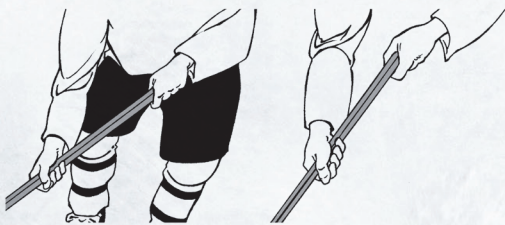


Figure 13-5. *Proper grip.*

### Basic Stance

Players must hold the stick in front of the body. The elbows and arms should move freely as the puck is moved back and forth in front of the body. Knees are bent, with head, chest, and eyes up (ready position).



Figure 13-6. *Basic puck control stance (ready position).*

## FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS FOR STICKHANDLING

### Wrist Roll and Cupping The Puck

Every time the player moves the puck from side to side, it is essential to roll the wrist. It is this rolling of the wrists that will enable the blade of the stick to cup the puck, which results in increased puck control.

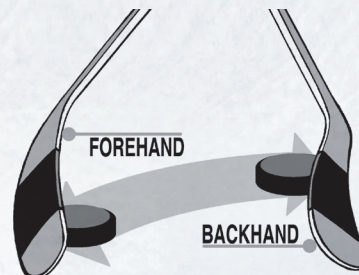


Figure 13-7. *Cupping the puck.*



### Split Vision

Split or peripheral vision refers to the ability to see the puck on the stick without looking directly at it. The player's eyes are up "reading" the play and what options are available. Indirectly, the player sees the puck out of the bottom of the eyes.

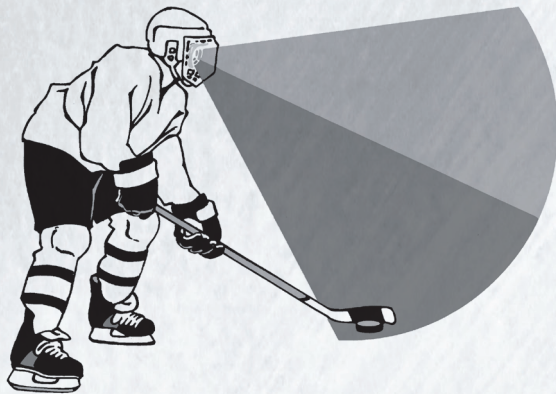


Figure 13-8. Split vision.

### Basic Stickhandling

Basic stickhandling is passing and receiving to oneself. Have the player concentrate on sliding the puck (don't slap the puck). Rolling the wrist and cupping the blade over the puck will result in the ability to control the puck better. The position of the puck on the stick is in the middle part of the blade. Have the players develop a "feel" for the puck by stickhandling 12 to 18 inches.

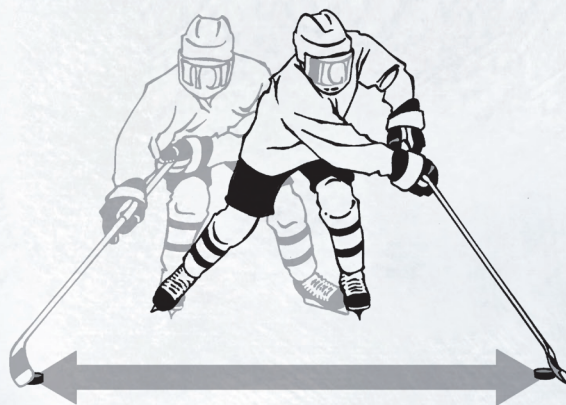


Figure 12-10. Lateral stickhandling and lateral stickhandling to full extension.

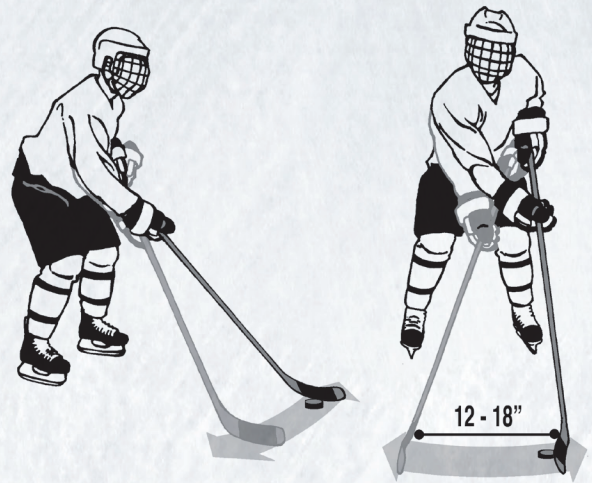


Figure 13-9. Basic stickhandling.

### DRILLS FOR THE BASIC SKILLS OF STICKHANDLING

#### Grip, Wrist Roll, Cupping the Puck and Dribbling

- Players spread out in front of coach with gloves off.
- Players demonstrate the proper grip.
- Players move hands side-to-side while rolling their wrists.
- Players will move the puck side-to-side (12 to 18 inches).



### Split Vision — Count the Coach's Fingers

- Players spread out in front of the coach.
- Players perform a basic dribble movement with head and eyes up.
- Players call out the number of fingers the coach is holding up.

## BASIC STICKHANDLING MOVEMENTS

### Lateral Stickhandling

This is the most important stickhandling movement a player will develop. Begin work on the lateral movement (side-to-side) in a stationary position. Work on moving the puck as far to each side as possible. The following key elements must be mastered:

#### Key Elements

- Grip the stick six to 12 inches apart.
- Grip the stick with the fingers, not the palms.
- Cup the puck with the blade by rolling the wrists.
- Keep the arms out in front of body to get a full range of extension.

#### Common Errors

- slapping the puck, rather than sweeping the puck
- not having the “V” on top of the stick between the thumb and first finger
- arms held close to the body
- hands too far apart on stick
- not rolling the wrists when trying to cup the puck
- top hand on the hip, not in front of the body

## FORWARD-TO-BACKWARD STICKHANDLING

The forward-to-backward stickhandling move is particularly useful while skating toward a defensive player who is moving toward you. It can be used when setting up a fake shot and when pulling the

puck to the side to take a sweep/wrist shot. The forward-to-backward move is difficult to learn while moving. Start your players in a stationary position and then gradually refine the skill at increasing speed. Stress that the puck must be moved forward on the skating line and brought backwards on the skating line.

#### Key Elements

- Keep puck motion at the side of the body.
- Keep puck motion parallel to the skate line.
- Roll the wrists, cupping the puck with the blade of the stick.



**Figure 13-11.** *Forward-to-backward stickhandling.*

#### Common Errors

- puck motion in front rather than at the side of the body
- puck drawn back into the skates (kick the back of the stick)

### Diagonal Stickhandling

The diagonal stickhandling move is especially effective when combined with the lateral or forward-to-backward moves. Have your players place the puck to side of their bodies (as if about to shoot a forehand shot) and then bring the puck diagonally across to the opposite side of the body and as far forward as the player can reach. This move is very useful when in too close to an opponent's stick and you must pull the puck back diagonally across the front of the stick.



### Key Elements

- Move the puck as far forward and then backward as possible on a diagonal line.
- Keep the hands close together.
- Roll the wrists to cup the puck with the blade.

### Common Errors

- failing to cup the puck with the blade
- head down looking at puck
- slapping the puck
- not moving the puck fast enough on the diagonal line

### BEGINNING MANEUVERS ONE VS. ONE SITUATIONS

The concept of “one versus” situations (especially one vs. one) is the most important ability for young players to master. Considerable opportunity should be given for players to practice one vs. one situations.

Players should know when to stickhandle to beat an opponent and when to pass to beat an opponent. Generally, a player should attempt to stickhandle around a player when there is no teammate in position for a pass.



Figure 13-12. Diagonal stickhandling.

Always observe the defender’s speed, direction, whether or not the defender is sweeping the stick, looking down at the puck, off balance, or lunging with his or her stick at the puck. Teach players after making a stickhandling move to quickly accelerate around the defender.

### BACKHAND FAKE — “PULL” TO FOREHAND

The forehand “pull” is one of the most important moves to teach your players when trying to stickhandle around a defender. It is very important that players learn the key words of “fake-pull-accelerate.” The forehand pull allows the player to move around the defender on his or her forehand side, which gives the player the opportunity to pass or shoot immediately.

**Fake** — Teach the players to set up the move with a slight move to the backhand side (and/or head and shoulders fake to the backhand side). This move should be strong enough to get the defender to react.

**Pull** — As the defender reacts to the fake, move the puck quickly across the body (if in close to stick, “pull” puck slightly back diagonally to clear stick) to full extension on forehand side and thrust off of the “backhand side” leg. At the same time, slide laterally with the body. This puts the player’s body between the defender and the puck.

**Accelerate** — Upon completion of the pull, accelerate with three quick forward crossovers to get around and behind the defender.





**Figure 13-13.** Backhand fake – pull to forehand.

#### Key Elements

- Move the puck out front on a backhand side diagonal while using a head and shoulder fake.
- The puck must be “pulled” quickly across the front of the body to “full” forehand extension.
- Use the body as much as possible to protect the puck.
- Use speed upon completion of the “pull” to get around and behind the defender.
- Keep the head up.
- Key Words: “Fake-Lateral Slide and Pull-Accelerate.”

#### Common Errors

- slowing down when approaching the defender
- not using the body to shield the puck from the defender
- not “pulling” the puck across the front of body quickly enough
- not “pulling” to a full forehand extension
- not accelerating after the lateral slide and pull

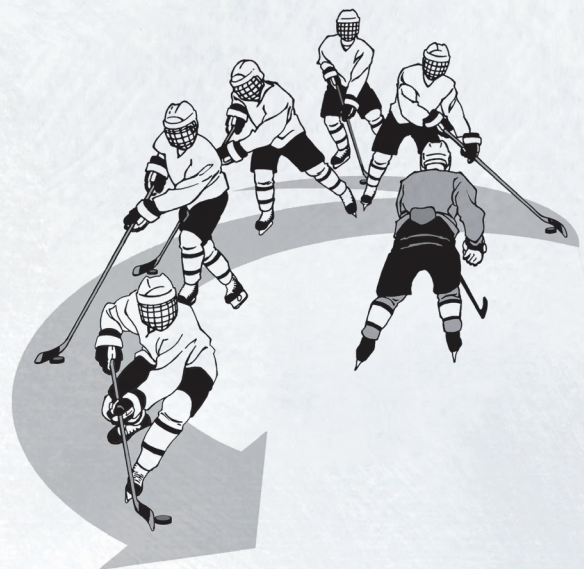
#### FOREHAND FAKE — BACKHAND “PULL”

The backhand “pull” must be developed to compliment the forehand pull skill development. The disadvantage of the backhand pull is that the player is going around the defender with the puck on his or her backhand. When going around an opponent, the majority of the time the player will go to his or her backhand side.

The same key phrase is used as in the forehand “pull.” The only difference is that the “fake” is made to the backhand side.

#### Key Elements

- Move the puck out front on a backhand side diagonal while using a head and shoulder fake.
- The puck must be “pulled” quickly across the front of the body to “full” backhand extension.
- Use the body as much as possible to protect the puck.
- Use speed upon completion of the “pull” to get around and behind the defender.
- Keep the head up.
- Key Words: “Fake-Lateral Slide and Pull-Accelerate.”



**Figure 13-14.** Forehand fake – backhand pull.



### Common Errors

- slowing down when approaching the defender
- not using the body to shield the puck from the defender
- not “pulling” the puck across the front of body quick enough
- not “pulling” the puck to a full backhand extension
- not accelerating after the lateral slide and pull

### SPECIAL SKILLS IN PUCK CONTROL ACCELERATING IN OPEN ICE

Controlling the puck while accelerating in open ice is another skill that needs to be developed. By dropping the lower hand off the stick and using only one hand (the top hand), players will skate with more speed and freedom.

### Key Elements

- Drop the lower hand off the stick.
- By using only the top hand, players can skate with more speed.
- Bend the knees.
- Extend the arm and tilt the blade back pushing the puck well out in front of the body.
- When the puck starts to roll off the blade of the stick, rotate the wrist so the blade turns over the other way



Figure 13-15. Accelerating in open ice.

### Common Errors

- keeping puck too close to the body
- not holding the very end of stick with one hand
- keeping the blade of the stick too upright

### “SHIELDING” THE PUCK

The technique of shielding the puck teaches the player to keep the puck away from the defender and place his or her body between the puck and the opposing player.

In order to accomplish this, a player must utilize the skill of “expansion of reach” with the skill of a control turn. This should be taught both to the forehand and backhand sides.

One arm may also be utilized to help ward off the defender. On the forehand side the top hand would be used, while on the backhand side the bottom hand would be used.

### Key Elements

- Pull the puck to the side of the body away from the defender (full expansion reach).
- Place the body between the defender and the puck, use the “control turn” technique to protect the puck
- The blade of the stick is cupped over the puck.
- Take one hand off of the stick if needed to ward off the defender.

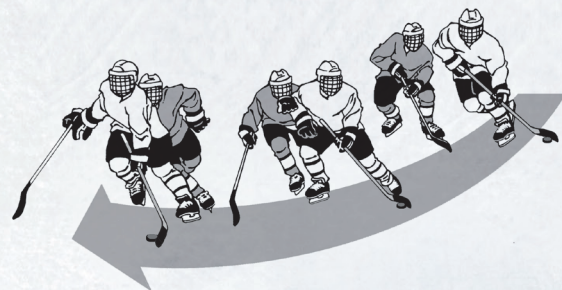


Figure 13-16. Shielding the puck.

### Common Errors

- puck is between carrier and defender
- stick blade is not cupped over puck
- player is standing too erect



## OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

The puck carrier must learn to overcome resistance by accelerating in front of the defender. By doing this, you take the “angle” away from the checker. This puts the defender behind you and prevents the defender from playing your body.



Figure 13-17. Overcoming resistance.

### Key Elements

- Accelerate when the checker has the “angle” by doing forward crossovers to get in front. This prevents stick/body checks.
- Continue to skate once in front of checker.

### Common Errors

- puck carrier glides once in front of checker
- puck carrier doesn’t get directly in front of checker

## SKATE CONTROL

Skate control is an important part of puck control. A player must develop a great deal of balance and

agility to use his or her skates for puck control. Some skills with skates that should be developed are:

1. Skate forward and kick up a loose puck with a skate to the stick.
2. Drop the puck back into the skates and kick it back up to the stick.
3. Foot drag – control the puck by kicking it out from behind the other blade.
4. Control the puck along the boards with the skates when being pressured.

### Key Elements

- Balance and shift weight to one skate.
- The skate contacting puck is turned with toe out and heel in.
- Cushion the puck with the skate blade, as in stickhandling.

### Common Errors

- not shifting weight and balance to one skate
- kickin” puck instead of controlling puck

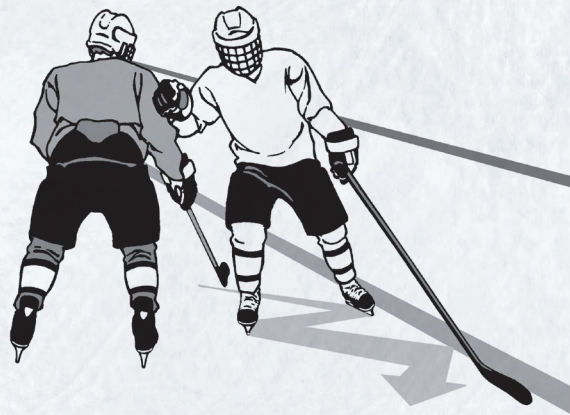


Figure 13-18. Skate control skills.

## LEARN MORE

Click on the following link(s) for more information on the topics covered in this chapter. (*Internet access is required*).

[www.usahockey.com/page/show/893678-usa-hockey-mobile-coach-](http://www.usahockey.com/page/show/893678-usa-hockey-mobile-coach)