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[Ice Hockey Positions](#)

Forwards

A Forward is a hockey player position on the ice whose responsibility is primarily offensive. Generally, the offensemen try to stay in three different lanes, also known as thirds, of the ice going from goal to goal. It is not mandatory however, to stay in a lane. Staying in a lane aids in forming the common offensive strategy known as a triangle. One offenseman obtains the puck and then the offenseman pass it between themselves making the goalie move side to side. This strategy opens up the net for scoring opportunities. This strategy allows for a constant flow of the play, attempting to maintain the control of play by one team in the offensive zone. The offense can pass to the defensive players playing at the blue line, thus freeing up the play and allowing either a shot from the point (blue line position where the defense stands) or a pass back to the offense. This then begins the triangle again.

Each team has three forwards:

- * centre
- * left-wing (Winger)
- * right-wing (Winger)

Center

Center is a forward position of a player whose primary zone of play is the middle of the ice, away from the side boards. Centres have more flexibility in their positioning and are expected to cover more ice surface than any other player. Centres are ideally faster skaters who can backcheck quickly from deep in the opposing zone.

Offensive zone play

Centres position themselves in front or behind the net.

Front of net positioning: if the defense has the puck, the centre should use the opportunity to screen the goaltender. A shot can then be taken by the defence and the centre can step out of the way or deflect it with his or her stick. The centre can also use front of the net positioning to draw a penalty (cause the opposing team to get a penalty). This is done by standing firmly in front of the net. Because the opposing defence's job is to remove players from the front of the net, they may get frustrated with the centre's perseverance and become too aggressive in removing him or her, leading to their penalty call. Centres should stay out of the goal crease otherwise they may get the penalty.

Back of the net positioning When a centre's winger is being attacked along the boards, the centre can position him/herself behind the net. Once he or she receives a pass behind the net, he or she can make a quick pass to a waiting Winger in front of the net. The centre can also look for a pinching defencemen to pass to.

Neutral zone play

During a rush, if the winger carries the puck towards the centre, the centre should replace that winger's position and expect a pass. This causes confusion for the opposing players. If the centre is rushing up the ice with the puck he or she should initiate the crossover by heading towards a winger's side.

Defensive zone play

Centres position themselves in front or behind their net. While in the defensive zone, centres play deep and are expected to help their defense along the boards. Centres are the extra player in the defensive zone; one who picks up any opposing player who is left open in front of the net or along the back boards. Once the centre acquires the puck deep in their zone they should look for their winger waiting on the boards.

Back checking

Centres should always be prepared for a quick breakout by the opposing team. The centre is expected to be deepest in the offensive zone but first of the Forwards to backcheck. On the backcheck, the centre should take the first opposing player not covered (usually "the third man back").

Faceoffs

It is the Centre's job to take faceoffs (referee drops the puck between two opposing players to commence or resume play). A centre should look at the spot where the puck will be dropped. Using his or her peripheral vision, he or she should swiftly sweep the puck back to their Defence. It is very important for the centre to tie up (hold/block temporarily) his/her opposing centre immediately after the faceoff is won or lost. Otherwise the opposing centre can join a rush or create a scoring chance.

Winger

Forward position of a player whose primary zone of play on the ice is along the outer playing area. They typically work by flanking the centre forward. Originally the name was given to forward players who went up and down the sides of the rink. Nowadays, there are different types of wing men/women (wingers) in the game — out-and-out goal scorers, checkers who disrupt the opponents, and forwards who work along the boards and in the corners. This position is commonly referred to by the side of the rink that the winger normally takes, e.g. “left wing” or “right wing.”

Offensive Zone Play

A winger’s responsibilities in the offensive zone include:

- * fighting for the puck in the corners
- * positioning themselves in front of the net
- * making plays to open teammates

Wingers should not:

- * fight for the puck in the same corner as his or her fellow winger
- * chase the puck down low in his or her own zone

Aggression is key to being a winger; games often hinge on the grit and determination behind players who relentlessly fight for the puck and harass opponents. This is not always how a winger plays. He could be a winger that only plays for assists and goals. This sort of play holds the immediate goal of keeping the puck deep in the offensive zone, and the longer term goal of exhausting the defense and scoring a goal. This is usually referred to as hemming the opposition, as in “the opposition is hemmed in their own end”. Wingers who play very physically are known as grinders for their ability to literally grind opposition against the boards until the puck squeezes out. Wingers tend to “plant” themselves in front of the net, usually to distract or screen a goalie, attempt a deflection, throw the defense into disarray, or draw a penalty. It is a common tactic for teams on the power play to plant a winger in front of the net and attempt to deflect a slapshot past the goalie.

Defensive Zone Play

A winger’s responsibility in the defensive zone is to:

- * wait for a pass from his or her teammate
- * intercept a pass to the opposing defenceman
- * attack the opposing defenceman when he/she has the puck

A winger should (typically) not:

- * play deep in his or her zone
- * help out his/her teammate along the boards

Wingers should be playing high in the zone, and always be vigilant for a breakout pass or a

chance to chip the puck offside. When a winger receives a pass along the boards, they can exercise a number of options:

- * Bank the puck off the boards or glass to get it out of the zone
- * Redirect or softly pass the puck to a rushing forward
- * Shoot the puck out to the center line to another forward who can either set up an attack, or dump the puck into the offensive zone to summon a line change
- * Carry the puck themselves to attempt a breakaway

Backchecking

Wingers are usually the last players to backcheck out of the offensive zone. On the backcheck, it is essential that they cover the last free opposing player rushing in. Once the puck is controlled by the opposing team in the defensive zone, however, wingers are responsible for covering the defenseman on their side of the ice.

Faceoffs

During faceoffs, it is essential for the wingers to occupy the opponent they have been assigned. Although the centres are the only official participants in the faceoff, anyone can charge in for possession of the puck once it hits the ice, thus making it essential that every opponent is too tied up to fight for possession. Once the faceoff is clearly won, wingers can set themselves up into appropriate position.

Defense

Defence in hockey is a player position with a primary responsibility to prevent the opposing team from scoring goals. Defence players are often referred to as the D. In regular play there are two defence players and three forwards on the ice along with the goaltender.

'Stay-at-home' and 'Offensive defence'

Defence players are generally divided into two rough groups. Stay-at-home defence refers to a defender who takes few risks and does not score much, preferring to focus on defending against the opposing team. An offensive defence player is one who gets aggressively involved in the team's offence and scores more often as a result. To accomplish this, the offensive defence player often goes deep into the opposing team's zone to get closer to their net. This makes it difficult for the defender to protect his or her own net from being scored on if the other team gains control of the puck. This can lead to more breakaway opportunities for the opposing team.

Defensive zone play

When in the defensive zone, the defence player is responsible for keeping the opposing forwards' opportunities to a minimum when they are on a rush, forcing them to the corners and blocking both passing and shooting lanes. When the opposing offence is putting pressure on the defence's team, the defence skater usually plays closer to the goal, attempting again to block shooting lanes but also ensure that the goalie is not screened (prevented from being able to see the puck at all times).

Neutral zone play

In the neutral zone, the defence hangs back towards their own blue line, usually playing the puck up to other teammates. According to Jay Leach, who writes for NHL.com's "learn to play hockey" section, the defence must "Move the puck hard and quick to the open man. Join the rush, [but] do not lead it."

Offensive zone play

In the offensive zone, the defence skaters "play the blue line." It is their duty to keep the puck in the offensive zone by stopping it from crossing the blue line that demarcates where the offensive zone begins. Defence players must be quick to pass the puck around, helping their forwards to open up shooting lanes, or taking open shots themselves when they become available. The defence must also be able to skate quickly to cut off any breakaways, moving themselves back into the defensive zone ahead of the onrushing opponent.

Backchecking

The backcheck is a play in hockey where a non-defence skater moves back to play defence by keeping an opposing player out of a play through means of checking, stick control, and/or body positioning.

Essentially in all three zones of the rink, the defence is the backstop for the puck. It should never go behind the defence, unless the player lets it. The defence keeps the momentum of play squarely directed towards the opposing goal.

Faceoffs

During faceoffs in the defensive zone, most teams have their defence players pair up with opposing forwards to tie them up while leaving the team's forwards open to move the puck, though this is at the discretion of the individual coach. In the offensive zone, the defence player acts in his or her usual role, keeping control of the puck as the forwards fight for position.

Goalie

The goaltender (also known colloquially as goalie or netminder) in ice hockey is the player who defends his team's goal net by stopping shots of the puck from entering their team's net, thus preventing the opposing team from scoring. The goalie usually plays in or near the area in front of the net called the goal crease (often referred to simply as the crease). Due to the power and frequency of shots, the goaltender wears special equipment designed to protect the body from direct impact. No more than one player on each hockey team plays as goalie at any one time in a game.

Privileges

Goaltender is typically a specialized position in ice hockey; at higher levels in the game, no goalies play other positions and no other players play goalie. A typical ice hockey team may have on its roster two or three goaltenders. The goaltender has special privileges that other players do not. He or she wears special goaltending equipment that is subject to different regulations from those regarding the gear of other players. The goalie may legally hold (or freeze) the puck with his or her hands to cause a stoppage of play. If a player from the other

team hits him or her without making an attempt to get out of his or her way, the offending player is penalized. In some leagues, if a goalie's stick breaks, he or she can continue playing with a broken stick until the play is stopped, unlike other players who must drop any broken sticks immediately.

Saves

When a goalie blocks or stops a shot from going into his goal net, that action is called a save. Goalies often use a particular style, but in general they makes saves any way they can: catching the puck with their glove hand, deflecting the shot with their stick, blocking it with their leg pads or blocker or another part of their body, collapsing to butterfly position to block any low shot coming, especially in close proximity. After making a save, the goaltender attempts to control the rebound to avoid a goal scored by an opposing player when the goaltender is out of position ('scoring on a rebound'), or simply to allow the goalie's own team to get control of the puck. Goalies often catch a shot if they can to better control how it re-enters play. If there is immediate pressure, a goalie may choose to hold on to the puck (for a second or more, with judgment from the referee) to stop play for a face-off. If a goalie holds on to the puck for too long without any pressure they may be subject to a 2-minute 'delay of game' penalty. Recently, in the NHL and AHL, goalies have been restricted as to where they can play the puck behind the net.

Glossary and goalie technique

Angle play: The method where, by positioning themselves in a direct line between the shooter and the net, a goaltender covers more of the net than he/she would otherwise be able to. One of the most notable angle goaltenders was Bernie Parent.

Blocker: Worn on the right hand (for right-handed goaltenders), the blocker is a rectangular piece of equipment with a glove to hold the stick. It protects the wrist area, and can be used to direct shots away from the net. The blocker should be positioned at one's side, and at a height which allows the goaltender's stick to remain flat on the ice.

Butterfly save: On low shots, modern goaltenders usually work in the "butterfly" position, keeping their knees together and their stick covering their five-hole. The glove is kept up, ready for a possible deflection, and the goaltender is focused on the incoming shot.

Holes one through seven: There exist seven distinct positions a goaltender needs to cover:

1. At the corner of the net on the ice on the goaltender's stick side.
2. At the corner of the net on the ice on the goaltender's glove side.
3. On the goaltender's glove side, near the upper crossbar.
4. On the goaltender's stick side, near the upper crossbar.
5. Between the goaltender's legs. The five-hole is the only hole named by number in the present age.
6. Between the goaltender's torso and the stick side.
7. Between the goaltender's torso and the glove side.
8. "Through the chest of a goaltender"(a goaltender moving away from the puck from a straight on shot)

Leg pads: Worn on the goaltender's legs to both protect the legs and help stop shots. The leg pads may not be more than twelve inches in width. (Current NHL Rules have reduced this to 11" in width, while also restricting the overall height to 38".) The leg pads should come to about three inches above the knee. Pads which are too long will affect balance and timing;

pads which are too short will not protect the knees properly.

Leg pad save: A save made with any part of the leg pads. The goaltender should remain relaxed and skate backwards with the incoming shot, thus helping to absorb the blow and reduce the rebound effect. One type of leg pad save is the butterfly save.

Lie: The angle created between the handle of a goaltender's stick and the paddle. The higher the lie, the closer the stick resembles the capital letter "L".

Paddle: The thick part of the goaltender's stick, not to be confused with the blade; the blade should remain flat on the ice as often as possible.

Paddle down: A type of stance by the goaltender when the play is coming from the corner to the front of the net and the puck carrier is carrying the puck in front of the net looking to score. Here the goaltender puts the stick down on the ground, perpendicular to the ice, with the leg farthest from the post down and the other up and ready to push. This works well against angled rushes or wraparounds where the skater would normally out skate the goalie. The skater does have the top part of the net to shoot at, but lifting the puck over the goalie from up close tends to be difficult. The paddle down stance is also effective against low passes from behind the net to players looking to score from the slot.

Poke check: When the goaltender wants to poke the puck away from an opposing puck-carrier, he/she quickly slides his hand up the stick, thrusting forward towards the puck. This is a dangerous move, and occasionally the goaltender will miss and the puck-carrier will be left with an unguarded net.

Screen shot: Screen shots are blind shots. In the screen shot, another player (usually an opponent, but sometimes the goaltender's own teammate) stands between the shooter and the goaltender, obscuring the goaltender's vision of the shot. On a screen shot, the goaltender must do everything possible to try to see the shot, dropping to the butterfly stance and thrusting their trapper out at the sound of a shot. Some goalies, such as Ed Belfour or Ron Hextall, go as far as (illegally) punching players in the head or slashing their legs.

Shuffle: A technique for lateral movement when the puck is relatively close to the net. The goaltender slides his/her legs, one at a time, in the desired direction. If the goaltender is not quick this technique momentarily leaves the five-hole open. This is the most common method of movement for a goaltender.

Skate save: A save made with the goaltender's skate. The goaltender decides which direction the rebound should travel in, and turns his/her skate in that direction. Then, bending the other leg, he/she pushes towards the puck with the off leg, as the bent knee drops to the ice. This move is rarely used and widely thought of as "not effective"

Skating: A common fallacy is that the goaltender can get by with merely adequate skating, and oftentimes young players are placed in net due to their poor skating. In fact, the goaltender must be one of the best technical skaters on the team, and must be able to keep up with the moves of every skater on opposing teams. In particular, goaltenders must be adept at lateral skating and quick pivoting.

Stacking the pads: When a goaltender is on the angle, often a sudden pass close to the net will leave the net relatively unguarded. Stacking the pads is a desperation move in which the goaltender slides feet-first, with legs together (and consequently, "stacked"), towards the potential shooter, attempting to cover as much space as possible.

Stance: In a proper stance, the goaltender has the weight on the balls of his/her feet, the trapper and blocker just above knee-height, and the stick flat on the ice. Stance should also be conformed to the goaltenders style and comfort.

Stick: The stick, held by the goaltender in their blocker hand, the blade of the stick should remain flat on the ice. Keep notice of the lie on a new stick. A high lie will force a goaltender to play on their heels, offsetting balance, while a low lie places a goaltender lower to the ice, and may affect high saves.

Stick save: A save made with the goaltender's stick. On stick saves, the goaltender should not keep a tight grip on the stick, instead allowing the shot's momentum to push the stick back into the skates/pads, cushioning the blow.

T-push: A technique used by goaltenders to move in a lateral direction. To perform a t-push, a goaltender directs his/her outside skate in the desired direction, pushing with both legs, covering the five hole. This method of lateral movement is most effective when the puck is far from the net. Use of this move when the puck is in close will result in a goal through the "5 Hole"

Telescoping: Telescoping is a method of moving inward and outward from the goal crease. Most often used in setting up prior to the puck entering their zone, this move is accomplished by simply allowing your skates to separate, resulting in forward motion, then pulling your skates back together and stopping. At no time during a telescope do your skates leave the ice.

Trapper: This piece of equipment is often referred to simply as the "glove", and it was originally shaped in the same fashion as a baseball glove, it has evolved into a highly specific piece of equipment that is designed specifically for catching the puck. Some of the more significant changes are the use of a "string mesh" in the pocket of the trapper, and the substantial palm and wrist protection. The pocket is the area between the thumb and first finger of the glove, and is where most goaltender's try to catch the puck, as it reduces the discomfort of the goaltender and the chance of a rebound falling out of the glove. The trapper can be held in a variety of positions depending upon the individual goaltender, but the trend among younger goaltenders is to hold the glove with the palm facing towards the shooter, instead of the "shake hands" position that was popular for so long.

Pro-fly: This style of play is derived from the butterfly style of play, although most will argue that this is nothing more than a marketing term. Current leg pad design allows for the full face of the pad to be perpendicular to the ice, maximizing blocking area. This is still considered a butterfly motion, as the mechanics of making the save are the same, however it is the design of the leg pad that achieves this rotation more than anything.

Playing styles

Stand-up style

There are many ways to stop the puck and methods of doing this have been created over. The oldest one is the "Stand-up" style. In this style you stop the puck from a standing position, not going down. The Goalies may bend over to stop the puck with their upper body or may kick the puck. Those saves made by kicking are known as kick saves or skate saves. They may also simply use their stick to stop it. This was the style seen in the early NHL and was most commonly used up until the early 90's. One of the more notable goalies who was last seen using stand up was Kirk McLean, but most of the goalies from earlier decades such as Jacques Plante were goalies who were considered pure stand up goalies.

Toes up style

The style that came after “Stand-up” was “Toes Up”. In this style a goalie will go down to stop the puck and will kick their pads outwards with their toes pointed towards the ceiling. From this position goalies found more success stopping pucks down low than they had in stand up position. This was seen most often from the 70’s through mid 90’s. Grant Fuhr was the most notable goalie of this style and made a living off amazing and difficult looking saves from this style. (It should be noted that Grant Fuhr was actually a Hybrid Style goaltender (see below), and this style is not really a recognized one. Kick saves are a selection of the hybrid or traditional butterfly goaltender, but do not form the basis of a single style.)

Butterfly style

Another style is the “Butterfly”, where goalies go down with both pads with their toes pointing outwards and the tops of their pads meeting in the middle. This results in a “wall” of padding without any holes, lowering the chances of low angle shots getting in. Early innovators of this style were goaltending greats Glenn Hall and Tony Esposito, who played during the 50’s-60’s, and 70’s-80’s respectively. Hall is generally credited to be among the very first to use this style, and both he and Esposito had tremendous success with it. This is the most widely used style in the NHL today. “Butterfly” goalies have developed methods of sliding in the “Butterfly” position in order to move around fast in one timer situations. Patrick Roy is perhaps the greatest goalie to have employed this style. As pad size increased it became a more notable style of goaltending and is still currently evolving.

Hybrid style

This style of goaltending is a blend of all styles, where the goaltender primarily relies on reaction and positioning to make saves. Hybrid goaltenders will make kick saves, will utilize the butterfly, and are generally not as predictable as goaltenders who rely heavily on the butterfly as a save selection. While this style is generally not as utilized in the NHL, two goaltenders who have had great success in recent years using it are Martin Brodeur and Dominik Hasek

Penalties and substitutions

A goalie can get a penalty like any other player, but the goalie tends to have less bodily contact with players from the opposing team and therefore rarely gets a penalty. When he or she does get a penalty, the coach is allowed to select another player, who was on the ice at the time of the infraction, to sit in the penalty box for him or her, unless the goalie has been penalized for fighting. Goalies skate around the ice rink much less during play than other players and are substituted far less frequently in a game; typically, unless he or she performs poorly, a goalie plays out the entire game. As of the 2005-2006 NHL season, if a goalie touches the puck while in the restricted area behind the goal line, the goalie is penalized for delay of game.

Empty net situations

Normally, the goalie plays in or near the goal crease the whole game. However, there are a couple of situations when a goalie may leave the ice rink to be substituted by an attacking player to increase his or her team’s chance of scoring a goal. A team temporarily playing with no goalie is said to be playing with an empty net. If the opposing team commits a penalty while the goalie’s team has control of the puck, the goalie may leave to be substituted because as soon as the penalized team gets control of the puck, play is stopped by the referee to issue the penalty, before they can score a goal (called a delayed penalty). However, if the team with an empty net puts the puck in their own goal net by mistake, the goal still counts against them.

Also, during the last minute or so of a game, if a team is likely to lose anyway because they are a goal behind and the puck and playing action are on the other team's side of the ice rink, the coach may decide to have the goalie leave the rink to be substituted by an attacking player to increase the team's chance of scoring a goal to tie the game. Since no goalie is protecting the empty net, it is easier for the opposing team to score an empty net goal.

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Calendar

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Dunedin Thunder



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