



CORE SKILLS

OF FIELD HOCKEY



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THE FIELD HOCKEY STICK

ABOUT THE STICK

- A field hockey stick is flat on one side and round on the other.
- The top part of the stick is referred to as the grip.
- The bottom curved part of the stick is called the head with very tip of the head called the toe.
- Sticks are designed for use by right or left—hand dominant players, i.e. – there are no left-handed sticks.
- Sticks can differ in length, weight, material composition, bow, color and design shape.
- Goalkeeper sticks may differ in shape and weight.

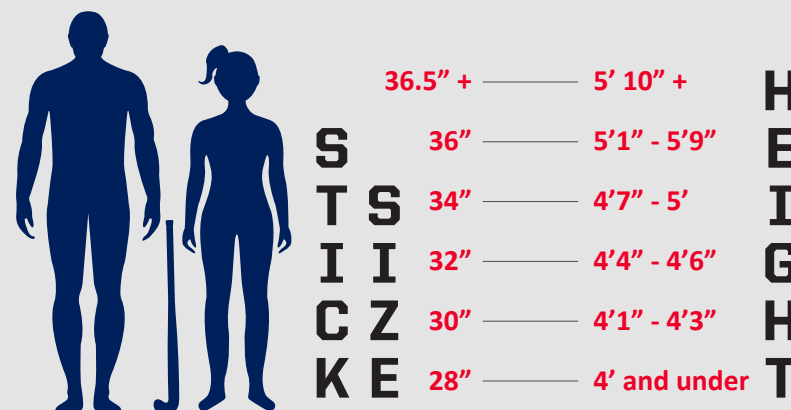
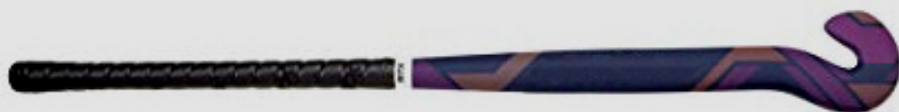
STICK USE

- Safety – can't swing dangerously.
- Players must have their stick in their hands at all times.
- The flat side of the stick and edges are used to play the ball.
- The rounded side of the stick can't be used to play the ball.
- Stick length is important – most players prefer a stick approximately hip height (see chart for approximate guidelines).

FIELD PLAYER OR GOALKEEPER STICK



GOALKEEPER STICK (OPTIONAL)



ATHLETIC STANCE

Field Hockey is an 'invasion' game like basketball, soccer, lacrosse, football and others. All of these sports require players to be in a balanced, 'ready' position, called an 'athletic stance'.

An athletic stance is a standing position which allows athletes to maximize strength, power and speed in all directions. This is the basic building block or starting point for many sports and is especially critical for field hockey.

Practice the athletic stance with the stick on the ground and in movement.

In field hockey, a player often runs without the ball with the stick in left hand only.

FOUR IMPORTANT RULES:

- Feet should be slightly wider than shoulders
- Position of knees should be inside feet
- Chest should be positioned over feet
- Back is in a neutral, not hyper-extended position.



GRIPS

▶ VIDEO

THE BASIC GRIP: HOLDING THE STICK

A player's hand position on the stick is called the grip. The first grip to learn is called the 'basic grip' used to control and moving the ball using the front and 'reverse' stick in which the player turns the stick over the ball to use only the flat side, moving the ball in both directions.

One of the simplest ways to teach a beginner how to hold the stick and establish the basic grip is through the following steps starting with the left hand:



1. First, lay your stick flat side facing to the ground and the rounded side of the stick facing up.



2. With the left hand, grab the stick at the top, close the fingers around the stick to form the grip.



3. Initially, this may feel strange and a slight adjustment to turn the left hand (about ¼ turn to the left) may be appropriate for some players prior to moving the ball.



4. Once the left hand is established, add the right hand.



5. Place the right hand comfortably on the stick towards the lower part of the grip.



6. It's okay for the index finger to be extended down the back of the stick for a greater sense of control.

GRIPS

THE BASIC GRIP: HOLDING THE STICK

For beginner players, it is critical to learn the basic grip and practice turning the stick over to control the ball. Coaches will need to be able to demonstrate and identify common errors, providing simple correction.

The right hand should be “soft or loose”, allowing the stick to turn within the right hand. This is sometimes called the ‘shake hand’ position

Encourage players to start by turning the stick with their left hand only, then incorporate the right hand with a very gentle grip to allow the stick to slide inside it. The left hand has control over the turning of the stick.

The correct technique is to release the right hand slightly while turning the stick with the left hand.

Error Detection & Correction - The most common mistake beginner players make is that their right-hand grips the stick too tightly, with all fingers gripping around the stick.

*A common solution for beginner players is to use or imagine their hand lightly grasping an empty toilet paper roll with the stick turning inside of it.



CORRECT



INCORRECT

GRIPS

THE DOUBLE V GRIP

▶ VIDEO

The second grip to learn is the Double V Grip. This grip is used for several skills including the forehand sweep.



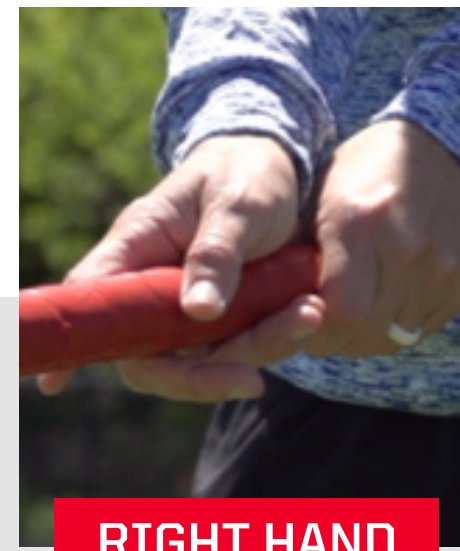
LEFT HAND

- V-Grip, the V between thumb and index finger down the inside edge of the stick
- Hand at top of the handle
- All fingers firm around the stick



BOTH HANDS

- Together to work as a unit, hands together



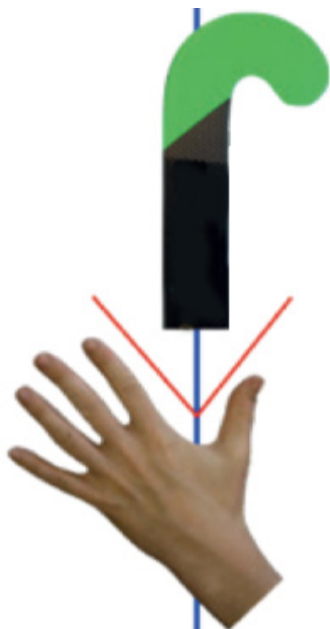
RIGHT HAND

- V-Grip, all fingers around the stick
- The 'V' between thumb and index finger

GRIPS

▶ VIDEO

THE PANCAKE OR FRYING PAN GRIP



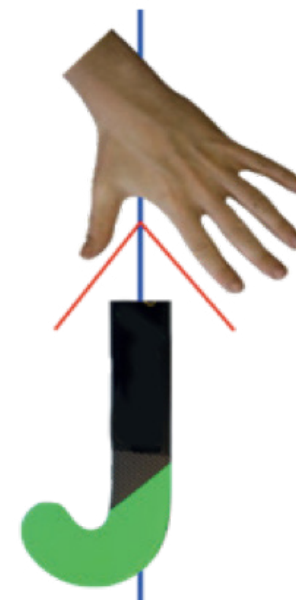
LEFT HAND

- V-Grip on top of the stick
- All fingers firmly around the stick
- The V between thumb and index finger along the front face of the stick



BOTH HANDS

- Separated, about two hands in between



RIGHT HAND

- All fingers around the stick

BALL CONTROL

PULLS/DRAGS

▶ VIDEO

Once you can grip the stick correctly using the basic grip, it's time to start exploring basic ball movement. Individual stick skills are fun to learn and develop. Start with learning to move the ball in all directions, and with pulls, also call drags. Pulling the ball from the right side of your body to the left and from the left side to your right are key skills for all players to master and the foundation for many other skills.

- Basic Grip.
- A good way to practice this with young players is to start with the ball in front of their left toe with stick flipped over ball (FIG 1) and with a single drag, move to the ball to the right (FIG 2) and return back to the left side (FIG 3).
- The right hand should be “soft or loose”, allowing the stick to turn within the right hand.
- Encourage players to start by turning the stick with their left hand only, then incorporate the right hand with a very gentle grip to allow the stick to slide inside it. The left hand has control over the turning of the stick.
- The correct technique is to release the right hand slightly while turning the stick with the left hand.
- As the skill develops the hand and ball speed will increase.
- As players improve, you can add more movement. To be an effective elimination skill, it is important to have control of your body and the ball.
- Start with short drags and progress to “yard-stick drags” where the ball is traveling a full yard or approximately the length of the players stick.
- Count how many you can do in a minute and work to increase the number.
- Once a player can do this in a stationery position, add movement, as this pull is an important way to dodge around defenders and create time and space.



FIG 1 - BALL STARTING ON LEFT FOOT



FIG 2 - BALL BEING PULLED ACROSS TO RIGHT FOOT



FIG 3 - BALL PULLED BACK TO LEFT SIDE

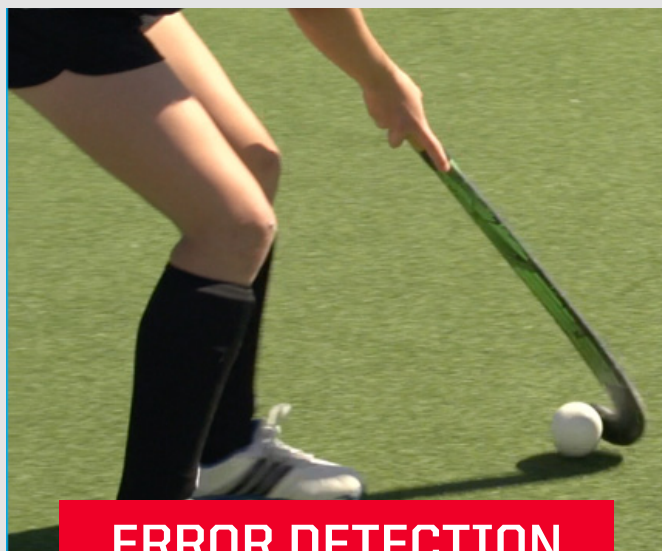
BALL CONTROL

PULLS/DRAGS

**COMMON ERRORS TO LOOK FOR:
WHEN PRACTICING DRIBBLING THE BALL COMES TOWARDS THE PLAYER'S FEET**

One of the most common mistakes is when pulling from the left or reverse side the ball, the ball travels back towards the player's feet.

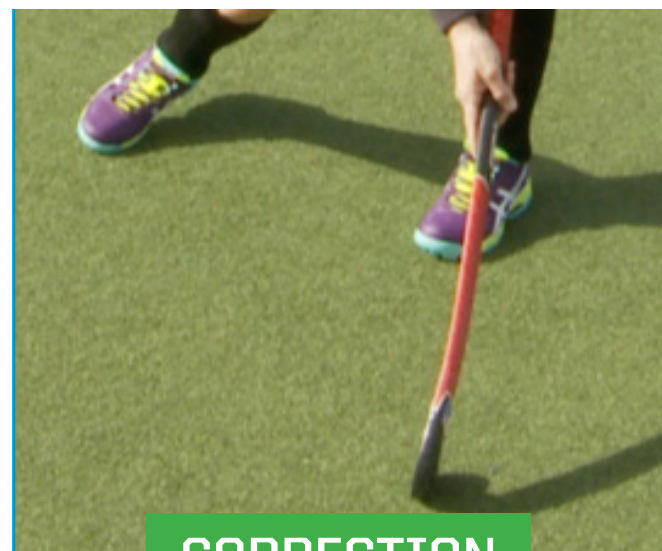
This is often a result of the stick head not fully coming over the ball on the reverse side, this results in the ball moving back towards the feet.



ERROR DETECTION

To adjust, turn the left hand slightly to the right. This should allow the stick to turn over further, meaning the ball will move parallel to the player's feet and not back towards them.

Remember to keep the knees slightly bent, which will also help keep the ball away from their feet.



CORRECTION

BALL CONTROL

PULLS/DRAGS

COMMON ERRORS TO LOOK FOR:



Another common error is that the right or bottom hand is placed incorrectly on the stick. If a player's bottom hand is too low, this can lead to restricted movement and vision. The exception may be when receiving bouncing passes.



If a player's hand is too high on the stick, a player may become too upright and will be unable to control the ball and mobility is limited.

*As players improve the right hand can move up the stick as it can be more efficient when moving quickly with the ball



Developing players should be encouraged to find a comfortable, balanced position.

BALL CONTROL

FOREHAND OR 'OPEN' DRIBBLE

▶ VIDEO

Field Hockey is a fast game. Being able to move quickly with the ball in all directions is an essential skill, and finding a comfortable dribbling position is important. There are a variety of dribbling techniques that can be used in different situations. The fastest type of dribble is the open or forehand dribble with players in a more upright position, allowing for faster movement.

- Basic Grip
- Arms away from your body – Left elbow bent – right arm straight
- Head up
- Ball in front and slightly outside the right foot
- Imagine you are stood in the center of a clock face – Good carry positions are normally between 1-2 o'clock



In open space, a player can cover longer distances faster by being more upright and keeping the ball well out in front of them and not glued to the stick.



In congested and tight areas, it is necessary to protect the ball from defenders, requiring a lower body position and closer contact with the ball. Think of your stick as a vacuum. This is called a close open dribble.



When practicing the open stick dribble have players move their feet behind the ball while trying to keep forward vision. Notice how the elbow is raised when dribbling on the left side of the field to allow for greater vision.

BALL CONTROL

INDIAN DRIBBLE

▶ VIDEO

The Indian Dribble is used to move the ball from forehand to reverse and vice-versa. Players will re-grip their left hand in order to be able to play the ball with the reverse. A well-executed Indian Dribble will be played from one grip only.

As with the open stick dribble, the basic grip is also used for the Indian dribble.

With the Indian dribble, the ball is moved from side to side using the reverse stick, when ball is outside the left foot.

- Basic Grip.
- The stick is turned by using the left hand. The right hand is loose on the stick allowing the stick to turn through the hand, while the right-hand guides the lower part of the stick.
- If you are on a grass surface, it is important to over-exaggerate the pull somewhat by moving your hands outside of your body in order to pull the bottom of the ball.

ERROR DETECTION AND CORRECTION

It is common to see younger players gripping the stick too tight with the right hand and trying to turn the stick without loosening the grip.

The correct technique is to release the right hand slightly when turning the stick with the left hand.

Get the players to turn the stick with their left hand only and then incorporate the right hand with a very gentle grip to allow the stick to slide inside it. The left hand has control over the turning of the stick.



BALL CONTROL

3D SKILLS

▶ VIDEO

Field Hockey is a multi-dimensional game as the ball isn't always on the ground. The ball can be carried in the air over short distances and lifted in the air over long distances in the form of a shot or an aerial pass. As a beginner, it's important to learn 3D skills such as a little lift over an opponent's stick or an flick on goal. Even though players are allowed to play the ball with their stick over their head, at the beginning stages of learning, this should not be allowed for safety reasons.

- Basic Grip.
- It's important that you move the ball while trying to lift it (ex. Pull the ball left or right).
- Think about picking the ball up with your stick and moving it.
- Make sure that when the ball is in the air that your stick is near the ball.
- When in congested areas the ball needs to be below knee height to prevent danger.



PASSING SKILLS

THE PUSH



Stationary



On the Move

Learning to pass the ball accurately and with appropriate pace is another important skill to introduce to beginners. The push pass is commonly used over shorter distances. It can be a quick pass as there's no backswing. The stick starts on the ball. Players need to master this skill and be able to execute a push pass with accuracy, pace and control off either foot.

KEY COACHING POINTS:

- Basic grip – Some players may prefer to adjust the left hand slightly by rotating it a quarter turn to the left.
- Stand in a side on position with left shoulder facing the target.
- Start with feet about shoulder width apart.
- No backswing, start with stick on the ball.
- Push the ball, shifting your weight from your right foot to your left foot (keeping front knee bent) – the transfer of weight generates the power.
- Follow through towards your target.
- Keep the head of your stick pointing towards the target; this should happen naturally if grip is correct and follow-through is toward the target.



PASSING SKILLS

THE FOREHAND SWEEP

▶ VIDEO

Sweeps can be done with forehand or backhand. The forehand sweep is a fun skill that is primarily used on flat surfaces, such as artificial turf, smooth grass and indoor. It can be more powerful than a push and is ideal for medium and longer-range passes. This is a slightly more advanced skill requiring low body positioning and more attention to starting ball position. Hands are close to the turf in a low, sweeping action.

KEY COACHING POINTS:

- Double V Grip.
- Ball out in front of left foot - There needs to be space between the body and the ball where arms are outstretched.
- Requires a lunge position with left leg bent at almost a 90-degree angle.
- Stick and hands stay low to ground throughout the sweeping motion. Backswing is flat to the ground while stick moves behind the back foot and towards your right foot (staying on the ground) and comes the whole way around your body, while you shift your weight from back to front foot.



PASSING SKILLS

THE BACKHAND SWEEP

▶ VIDEO

SKILLS - BACKHAND SWEEP OR 'SLIDE' (HANDS APART-SHORT BACKSWING)

The backhand sweep can be a very effective pass, when moving the ball, in congested areas, and when a quick pass or shot is required. This skill is different from the forehand sweep in that your hands are apart on the stick. We will cover the backhand sweep with hand together later.

KEY COACHING POINTS:

- Basic grip into Frying Pan Grip.
- The ball is placed in front of the body.
- The back of the stick remains on the playing surface throughout the action (backswing and follow through).
- The right hand crosses over the left to create the backswing.
- The right hand then “chops” towards the ball making contact on the middle (back) of the ball.
- The front edge of the stick just above the head is the contact point on the stick.
- This pass can be made of either the right or left foot.



INITIAL GRIP



POINT OF CONTACT

PASSING SKILLS

THE HIT

▶ VIDEO

The Hit can be used by all players. It is a great option for defenders who want to make long passes from the backfield. It is also a highly effective skill that can be used for goal scoring. Because there is a backswing, this skill is used when you have time and space to execute the skill. The hit can take time to learn as it is a complex skill. Coaches can get caught giving too much information when teaching the hit. Keep it simple.

KEY COACHING POINTS:

- Double V Grip.
- Ball position - Ideally, the ball should be off your left foot when taking step to hit.
- Full Backswing – Toe should be facing up.
- Full follow through to your target to finish – Smooth action ensuring the face of the stick strikes the back of the ball at the point of contact with a smooth, flowing action through the ball.
- Keep your head over the ball, not over the knee on contact.



BASIC RECEIVING

▶ VIDEO

▶ VIDEO

*Forehand
Receive*

*Reverse
Receive*

Another essential skill is learning how to receive a pass, sometimes referred to as trapping. Passes are not always perfect, so players need to learn to move and adjust their stick and body to receive the ball in the most balanced possible position and in a position to prepare for the next action or decision. There are many ways that you can receive the ball. Encourage players to practice receiving the ball on the move and ideally, with feet facing forward towards their goal.

KEY COACHING POINTS:

- Basic Grip
- Balanced body position
- Eyes on the ball
- Body behind the ball
- Hands away from your body
- Stick should be angled forward to minimize rebound and keep ball grounded and controlled



FOREHAND RECEIVE



REVERSE STICK ON THE MOVE



RECEIVING LIFTED PASS

THE IMPORTANCE OF BALL POSITION

Different skills require different optimal ball positions. Players should learn to develop excellent control to allow them to perform the next action or skill.

