



# Basic Rules of Hockey

## The Aim of the Game

The aim of the game is to hit the ball into the opponents' net. The team scoring the most goals wins.

To score a goal the ball must pass between the goalposts and beneath the crossbar.

If both teams score the same amount or no goals are scored, the match is a draw.

The game is started with a "*push-off*", or **centre pass**, from the centre spot. The ball can travel in any direction from a centre pass.

New for 2009-10 is the "*self-pass*" rule for free-hits. This allows any player to pass to themselves, so long as the ball is stationary and the action of taking the free-hit and the next playing of the ball are two separate actions. The new "*self-pass*" rule now applies to a centre pass, free-hit and putting the ball back into play after it has been outside the field (side-line hit or long-corner).

## Start & Duration

The bully (where two players line up opposite each other and tap their stick on the ground and then against each other's stick once before competing for the ball) is only used to re-start a match when time or play has been stopped for an injury or for any other reason when no penalty has been awarded.

A game is split into two halves lasting 35 minutes each.

At the beginning of each half play begins with a pass from the centre of the halfway line.

After a goal, the match is restarted in the same way. There is a five minute half-time interval, or longer if previously agreed.

## Scoring A Goal

Each goal is worth one point.

They can only be scored from inside the shooting circle - a semi-circular area in front of each goal.

Goals scored from outside this area are disallowed. An own-goal is only possible if a defender deflects a shot by an attacker inside the shooting circle (the shot must have been initiated within the shooting circle).

## Make Up of Teams

There are 11 players in a hockey team and up to five substitutes.

Every team will usually have a goalkeeper and the other 10 are out-field players. However, a team can choose to play without a goalkeeper, if they so wish, and have 11 out-field players on the pitch during a match.

The field players can be attackers, defenders or midfielders.

The exact line up will depend on the team strategy and so the exact number of forwards, midfielders and backs will vary.

## Match Safety

Hockey is played with a hard ball and emphasis is placed on safety.

Players must not intentionally raise the ball from a hit except for a shot at goal.

Players must not play the ball dangerously or in a way which leads to dangerous play.

A ball is considered dangerous when it causes legitimate evasive action by players.

New for 2009-10 is a revised procedure for taking attacking free-hits within the 23 metre area of the pitch. There are three basic rules: (1) the ball cannot be hit directly into the shooting circle, unless it was a "self-pass" and then the ball must travel with the player for 5 metres before entering the circle; (2) if a free-hit is awarded to the attack within 5 metres of the shooting-circle, it is taken at the nearest point 5 metres from the circle; and (3) when a free-hit is awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, all players other than the player taking the free-hit must be at least 5 metres from the ball.

## The Hockey Stick

One of the basic rules of hockey is that you can only use the flat side of the stick to hit or control the ball.

The rules state that players must "*hold their stick and not use it in a dangerous way*".

Players must not play the ball with any part of the stick when the ball is above shoulder height, except that defenders are permitted to use the stick to stop or deflect a shot at goal at any height.