

## P.E. SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

# FIELD HOCKEY



*“We know we are lucky to be born with a talent, but to make it to the real top you need to work hard every day.”*

**Ellen Hoog**, Dutch field hockey player

## INTRODUCTION

Field hockey is a demanding, vigorous sport that is growing in popularity. It combines intense physical activity and highly coordinated team play, and has the potential for great spectator appeal. It has been somewhat slow to become popular at the high school and college level because of the expensive special equipment required.



## HISTORY OF THE GAME

Hockey is thought to date back as far as ancient Greece. There is even evidence that the Aztecs played some version of hockey. Arabs, Persians and Romans all had their own version of the game.

Some believe that the word “hockey” comes from the French “hocquet,” a shepherd’s crook. Whatever its origin, the sport has been around for centuries; in fact, it is one of the oldest known sports.

By the late nineteenth century, hockey began to be played in English schools. In 1886, the Hockey Association of London was founded. British soldiers then took the game to India and the Far East. Indians were competing and winning international competitions by 1928—the year when India won the Olympic Games in field hockey. India, in fact, remained undefeated for twenty years until Pakistan emerged as a strong competitor.

Field hockey was first introduced into the United States in 1901 by an Englishwoman named Constance Applebee who taught the game to her classmates at Harvard. She was then invited to many women's colleges to demonstrate the game.

The World Hockey Cup was inaugurated in 1971. Today, the Asian Cup, the Asian Games, the European Cup and the Pan-American Games all are major international hockey events. Field hockey has been an Olympic men's event since 1908 and a women's event since 1980.



### **HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED**

In the game of field hockey, eleven players on each team play on a rectangular grass-covered field 100 yards long and 60 yards wide. The object of the game is for both teams to move the ball into the goal cage to score as many points as possible over their opponents.

The center pass is a method for putting the ball in play at the start of the game, following halftime and after each goal. The term "bully" refers to a method used by two opposing players to restart play.

Once the ball is in play, it must be hit or touched by an attacking player's stick within the striking circle of the goal cage so that the attacking team can score a goal or one point.

Only the goalkeeper can use his or her feet or body or the stick to stop a ball. Other players can use only the flat surface of the stick to move the ball. However, they can stop the ball with their hands. The stick can never be raised above shoulder level (see section on "Fouls" below).

Five forwards, three halfbacks, two fullbacks and a goalkeeper make up the team. A game is made up of two 35 minute halves. There is one five-minute break with time out called only for an injury.



## FOULS

Various types of fouls occur in field hockey. Fouls are called by one of the two umpires who are positioned on the two halves of the field. Most fouls are penalized by allowing the opposing team a free hit.

Here are some of the most common reasons for fouls:

1. Raising the stick above the shoulder during a game.
2. Advancing the ball with the hand (as opposed to stopping it, which is legal).
3. Hooking or grabbing an opponent's stick with another stick.
4. Undercutting, or causing the ball to rise so high that it becomes dangerous to others.
5. Coming between the opponent and the ball by putting a stick or some body part between the opponent and the ball (the obstruction rule).

## PLAYING TECHNIQUES

### ATTACKING SKILLS

When a team has control of the ball, many different techniques can be used to the offensive team's advantage. Six major techniques are as follows:



1. The **Drive**. This is a method of passing the ball to a teammate. The stick is lifted waist-high while on the downswing, and the left arm pulls the stick as the right arm pushes it. This move is usually spontaneous and is done on the run or is “walked into.” There’s usually no time to prepare to hit.
2. The **Dribble**. This move is made by gently tapping the ball along. While it looks and sounds easy, it takes practice to do it correctly. The stick

is carried to the right-hand side of the player's body with the elbows slightly bent. The player who is dribbling should keep his/her eyes on the ball and on the other players on both teams.

3. The **Scoop**. This technique often accompanies the dribble. It allows the player to scoop the ball far enough off the ground to clear the opponent's stick. It requires little backswing and little, if any, follow-through. It should be a gentle, lifting motion resulting in a reaching stroke. The ball is ahead of the supporting foot as the player reaches for the ball with the stick.



4. The **Flick**. This is also a reaching stroke with the ball ahead of the forward or supporting foot. This move puts a spin on the ball and can make it travel a considerable distance. However, the negative side of this move is that a spin can make it as difficult for a teammate to receive the ball as for an opponent to block it.
5. The **Push**. This move is used for short passes. There is no backswing on this move and both arms are working in the same motion. The move must be made quickly because as the player pushes the ball, the player's weight moves onto the toes of the forward foot.
6. The **Dodge**. "Dodging" is a general term applying to moves that are not passed and not used for shooting. The dodge is a method of avoiding or escaping an opponent while the player continues with the ball.

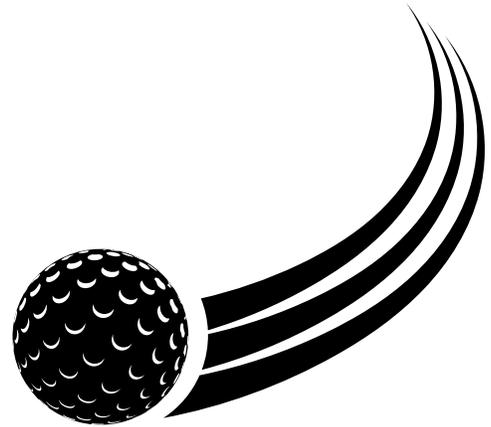


## SCORING GOALS

Being in good physical condition and having a good grasp of the game are of prime importance in field hockey. However, an aggressive player also wants to make the most goals possible. Field hockey participants eventually learn that being persistent on the field wins games.

In addition, it helps to observe these tips:

1. Make your attempt at the goal cage from a distance that's not too far away from the cage.
2. Aim at a specific spot in the goal cage, not just in the general direction of the goal.
3. Aim for the area left open by the goalkeeper. Remember: the goalie cannot be everywhere at once!
4. If it's not possible to attempt a goal, pass the ball to a teammate.



## **EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING**

One reason for the slowness with which field hockey has caught on at the high school level is the expense of furnishing the necessary equipment. Players need not only special clothing and equipment, but also a specific type of goal cage.

The hockey stick is usually 36 inches long and weighs from 12 to 28 pounds. The weight of the stick increases as the length increases. Only the flat side (left side) of the stick can be used to strike the ball.

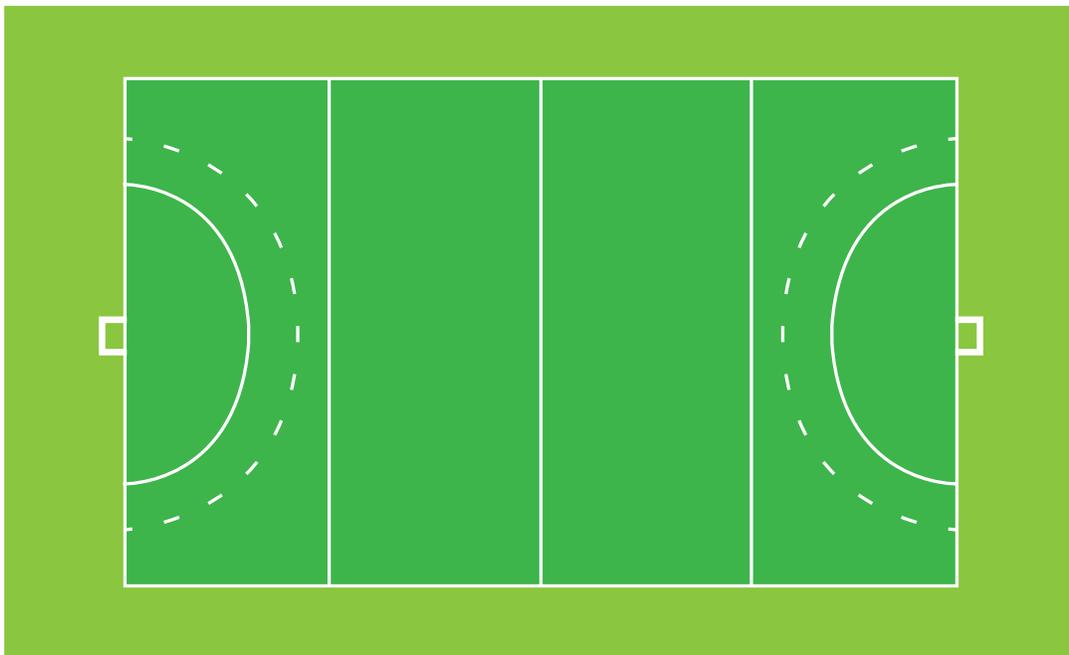
Sticks require careful treatment in order to make them last. They need an occasional sandpapering and rubbing with wax to keep them from splintering.

Today, balls are made of leather or plastic and can be any solid color as long as the color contrasts with the playing surface, instead of the older cricket balls.

Beginners can use tennis shoes to play field hockey. However, more advanced players and professionals use rubber-cleated hockey shoes. The cleats help players to stop, start and maintain balance on wet, mushy fields.

The goalie wears the heaviest, most cumbersome uniform of anyone on a hockey team. He or she wears protective padding and padded gloves to stop the sting of a fast ball. Goalies also wear shin pads (as should other members of the team).

The goal cages are also vital pieces of equipment in this game. They are four feet deep and four yards wide by seven feet high. Although older cages were difficult to set up and take down, modern goal cages are made of lightweight aluminum and are portable.



**FIELD HOCKEY NOTES**

Field hockey has never had the popularity in North America that it enjoys in other countries. In India, for example, field hockey is the most popular sport in the country. Popularity is sometimes a guide for predicting performance.

In the United States, field hockey is a competitive sport in high schools and colleges. Many high school teams operate under the jurisdiction of their school district and state athletic association. But not all states/schools may offer it as a sport. Field Hockey, at the collegiate level, is only a female sport. The Maryland Terrapins are among the most accomplished field hockey programs in the country.

As the National Governing Body for the sport, the United States Field Hockey Association prepares teams for participation in the Olympic Games, Pan American Games, World Cup and many other international competitions. The U.S. Field Hockey elite team programs include both national and age group squads for both men and women. This organization is also responsible for organizing the rules for this sport.

Field hockey is exciting to play and watch. Take advantage of opportunities to do both.

**Visit these websites to learn more:**

[www.ncaa.com](http://www.ncaa.com)

[www.fieldhockey.com](http://www.fieldhockey.com)

[www.usfieldhockey.com](http://www.usfieldhockey.com)