



Simplified Rules for Outdoor Hockey

For New Players, Parents, & other spectators

by Mario DeMello
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This guide:

- Was written to help parents and new players to understand and enjoy the game more
- Is not meant to replace the official Rules of Outdoor Hockey. It is meant to provide an overview of the rules
- Is not a complete interpretation of the rules but a simple guide to help you understand the game a bit better
- If you click on the blue text in this document, it will take you to other sites indicated by (external site) or to the page within this document that provides you with more detail about the item.
- Coaches and players are advised to read the official rules of the game. A copy of the Rule Book and Interpretations is available from Field Hockey Nova Scotia's web site at www.fieldhockey.ns.ca. Go to the Umpiring page and click on the sub-page links to view different free publications.
- Further interpretations are also available by contacting me via our FHNS Administrative Coordinator at info@fieldhockey.ns.ca. If I cannot answer your question, I'll get an interpretation from [Field Hockey Canada](#) or the [International Hockey Federation](#). Yes, it's called 'hockey' everywhere else in the world except for North America!

You missed a call! Not necessarily....we deliberately do not call some infractions

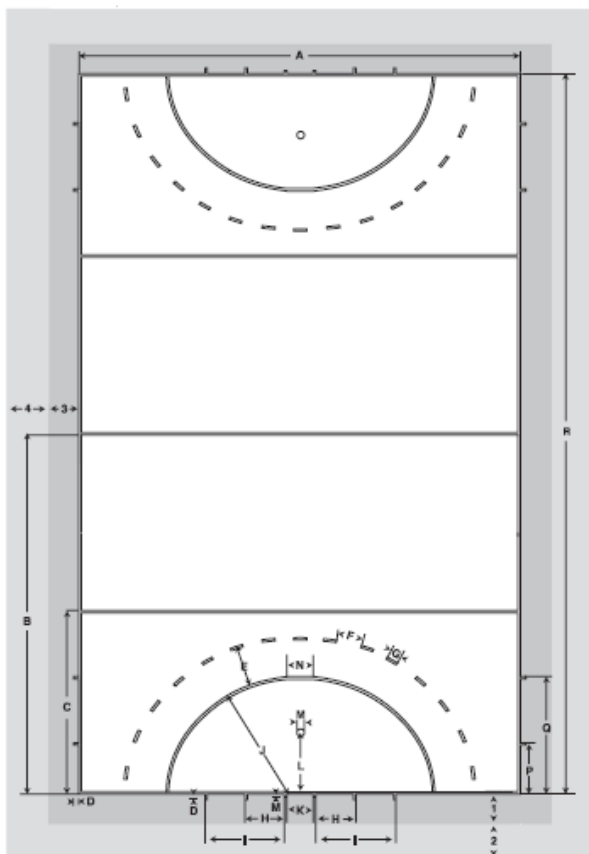
Before you read the rules, I should explain why we do not make some calls that appear to be obvious fouls. Here are some reasons:

1. We're there to make sure the players have a good time, are safe and play continues. At the Junior High and High School levels a lot of infractions (fouls) take place. Technically, the umpires should call them but it would simply slow the game down a lot. Therefore, it makes more sense to ignore some of the less serious fouls especially those where the offending player did not gain a big advantage from the infraction. *This is very difficult for umpires to do!* A good example is when the ball hits a player's foot or when a player attempts to stop a ball and it rises off the floor. If the player's action did not prevent an opponent from getting the ball and did not gain a significant advantage, let the play go on.
2. **Advantage.** The rule book states that the umpire does not have to call an infraction if the offending player did not gain an advantage or if the player who was offended re-gained possession of the ball. You'll notice that the umpire points one arm in the direction the benefiting team is playing but does not blow the whistle. They may even tell the players to "play on". They are indicating that they have seen the foul but are playing advantage.
3. A lot of the umpires are learning to umpire. In fact, some of them are only umpiring because we are short of umpires and are helping out. They will miss some calls. They are only human!
4. Umpires may get screened by the players and although they are pretty sure something happened, they must not guess. This is where the other umpire comes in. They work as a team and one umpire can help the other.
5. The bottom line....the umpires are there to ensure that both teams enjoy themselves and sometimes it is better to not make a call.

Terminology

At the bottom of this publication is a [glossary of terms](#) used in the game.

The Field of Play



Field Dimensions

Code	Metres	Code	Metres
A	55.00	M	0.15
B	45.70	N	3.66
C	22.90	P	5.00
D	0.30	Q	14.63
E	5.00	R	91.40
F	3.00	1	minimum 2.00
G	0.30	2	1.00
H*	4.975*	(1 + 2)	minimum 3.00
I*	9.975*	3	minimum 1.00
J	14.63	4	1.00
K	3.66	(3 + 4)	minimum 2.00
L	6.40		

* Dimensions H and I are measured from the goal-post line and not from the goal-post itself; the dimensions from the goal-post are 5.00 metres and 10.00 metres respectively.

General

- To **start the game**, re-start the game after half-time or after a goal has been scored:
 - A [centre pass](#) must be played from the centre of the pitch. It may be played in any direction.
 - All players other than the player making the pass must be in their half of the pitch.
 - All opponents must be at least 5m from the ball
- Illegal & Legal Strokes**
A player **may not**:
 - Play the ball with the back of the stick.
 - Intentionally play the ball with the feet
 - Hit the opponent's stick without playing the ball first
 - Raise the ball directly off a free-hit

A player **may**:

 - Hit or push the ball
 - When a [free-hit](#) is awarded, the player may also use a [self-pass](#)
- Offside**. There is no offside in field hockey.
- Ball hitting foot or body**. It is not automatically an offence if the ball hits the foot or body of a player. It is only an offence if the player who was hit:
 - Moved intentionally into the path of the ball, or
 - Made no effort to avoid being hit, or
 - Was positioned with the clear intention to stop the ball with the foot or body, or
 - Gains benefit



Goalkeepers

1. Goalkeepers may, when the ball is inside their own circle:
 - Use their stick, kickers, or leg guards to propel the ball without lifting it or use any part of their body, including their hands, to stop the ball. They may even move the ball away with their hand to prevent a possible goal but may not propel it a long distance.
 - Not lie on the ball or cover it deliberately to prevent the attackers from playing it.
 - Play the ball while lying on the pitch as long as every part of their body is inside the circle while playing the ball
 - Stop or deflect the ball above their shoulder
2. Goalkeepers may not play the ball in a manner that is dangerous to the other players.

Ball Outside the Pitch

1. **Over the side-line:**
 - The ball is placed on the side-line at the spot where the ball went out of play.
 - A player of the opposing team must play the ball.
2. **Over the back-line (goal-line):**
 - If the ball was last *played by an attacker* and no goal was scored, the ball must be played by defender anywhere along a line parallel to the sideline and across from where it crossed the back-line and up to 15m from the back-line.
 - If the ball was last *played by a defender*, and the action was:
 - *Unintentional* - a corner hit is awarded
 - *Intentional* - a penalty corner is awarded.



Raised Balls

1. The ball must not be raised intentionally directly from a free hit. In other situations, the ball may be raised as long as it is not dangerous or will lead to dangerous play
2. The umpires may ignore raised balls if the offender does not gain an advantage



Obstruction

1. This rule allows players of different physical builds to compete equally and to benefit based on their skills.
2. A player may not obstruct an opponent from attempting to play the ball by:
 - Moving their body or stick to stop the opponent
 - Shielding the ball with their stick or any part of their body
 - Physically interfering with the stick or body of the opponent
 - Moving between the opponent and a team-mate who has the ball to prevent the opponent from playing the ball ("pick")



Note however, that to be obstructed, the defending player must:

- be in position to play the ball and;
- must attempt to play it and;
- the player who has possession of the ball must shield the ball.

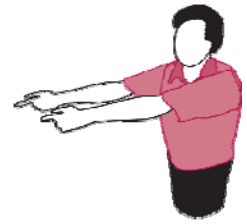
Substitution

1. Substitution is permitted at any time except within the period when a penalty corner is awarded until after it has been completed. During a penalty corner, only an injured goalkeeper may be substituted.
2. There is no limit to the number of players who may be substituted at the same time nor to the number of times any player may substitute or be substituted.
3. Substitutes are not permitted for suspended players during their suspension.

Penalty Corners

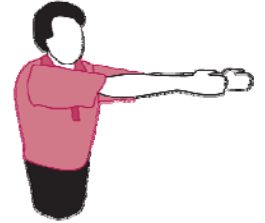
1. A penalty corner is awarded when:

- Unless a goal is scored, a defender deliberately sends the ball across their own goal line from anywhere on the field
 - An unintentional foul is caused by the defender within the circle and it did not prevent a probable goal
 - An intentional foul is caused by the defender within their own 23m area
 - Five defenders, including the goalkeeper, must stand behind the goal line until the ball is played by one of the attackers from the goal line to the other attackers who are at the top of the circle.
2. The initial pass to the attackers must go outside the circle before it is brought back into the circle for a shot at the goal.



Scoring a Goal

1. A goal is scored when the ball is played in the circle by an attacker and it enters the goal. *Note that the ball must completely cross the goal-line.*
2. There is not restriction on the type of shot at goal. However, attackers may not play the ball dangerously while it is in the air.
3. After a stoppage in play inside the circle, the ball must again be played inside the circle by an attacker before a goal can be scored.
4. If a defender is within 5m of the first shot at goal and is struck by the ball below the knee, another penalty corner is awarded. If a defender is within 5m of the first shot at goal and is struck by the ball above the knee in a normal stance, the shot is deemed to be dangerous and a free push is awarded to the defending team.



Penalties

1. A penalty is normally awarded only when a player or team has been clearly disadvantaged by an opponent's offence. You can tell which team committed the offence because the umpire points in their direction.
2. A **Free Push** is awarded for:
 - An offence by an attacker
 - An unintentional offence by the defender by the defence outside their circle
 - Note that if a defender commits an offence within 5m of the circle, the attackers get a free-hit no closer than 5m of the defender's circle.
 - For all free-hits awarded to attackers in their opponent's 23m area, the ball must not be played directly into the circle. The attacker may:
 - carry the ball into the circle themselves (**self-pass**)
 - use a self-pass to move the ball for a total of 5m before passing it into the circle to another attacker
 - pass it to another attacker who is outside the circle.
3. A **Penalty Corner** is awarded:
 - For an offence by a defender in their circle which does not prevent the probable scoring of a goal
 - For an *intentional* offence by a defender in their circle against an opponent who does not have possession of the ball or an opportunity to play the ball
 - For an *intentional offence* by the defence within their 23m area of the pitch but outside the circle
 - For *Intentionally* playing the ball over the back-line by a defender
 - If the ball becomes lodged in a player's clothing or equipment while in the circle.
4. A **Penalty Stroke** is awarded for:
 - An offence by a defender in their circle which prevents the probable scoring of a goal.
 - An *intentional offence* by a defender in their circle against an offender who has possession of the ball or an opportunity to play the ball.
 - Persistent early breaking off the back-line by defenders at penalty corners



5. **10m Progression.** If there is another offence by the previously offending team before the penalty has been taken, the penalty may be progressed up to 10m up the pitch.



Umpiring Signals

Go to the Rules page (under Umpires) at <http://www.fieldhockey.ns.ca/> to view an illustrated document of all the signals.

Timing

Start time: turn towards the other umpire with one arm straight up in the air

Stop time: turn towards the other umpire and cross fully-extended arms at the wrists above the head.

Two minutes of play remaining: raise both hands straight up in the air with pointing index fingers

One minute of play remaining: raise one hand straight up in the air with pointing index finger.

Ball out of play

1. ball out of play **over the side-board:** indicate the direction with one arm raised horizontally. Ball must be taken 1m from the sideboard
2. ball out of play **over the back-line** by an attacker and unintentionally by a defender. Umpire faces the centre of the pitch and extends both arms horizontally sideways at shoulder level.

Goal scored: point both arms horizontally towards the centre of the pitch.

Conduct of play

Signals for conduct of play offences must be shown if there is doubt about the reason for the decision.

1. **dangerous play:** place one forearm diagonally across the chest
2. **misconduct and/or bad temper:** stop play and make a calming movement by moving both hands slowly up and down, palms downward, in front of the body
3. **kick:** slightly raise a leg and touch it near the foot or ankle with the hand
4. **raised ball:** hold palms facing each other horizontally in front of the body, with one palm approximately 150 mm above the other
5. **obstruction:** hold crossed forearms in front of the chest
6. **third party or shadow obstruction:** alternately open and close crossed forearms in front of the chest
7. **stick obstruction:** hold one arm out and downwards in front of the body half-way between vertical and horizontal; touch the forearm with the other hand
8. **3m distance:** extend one arm straight up in the air showing an open hand with all fingers extended.

Penalties

1. **advantage:** extend one arm high from the shoulder in the direction in which the benefiting team is playing
2. **free push:** indicate the direction with one arm raised horizontally
3. **free push progressed up to 5m:** raise one arm vertically with fist clenched
4. **penalty corner:** point both arms horizontally towards the goal
5. **penalty stroke:** point one arm at the penalty stroke mark and the other straight up in the air; this signal also indicates time stopped.

Glossary

Attacker: A player whose team has possession of the ball and is attempting to score a goal.

Back-line: The line indicating the end of the field and includes the goal line between the goal posts.

Bully: Similar to a face-off. The referee places the ball on the ground, and the two opposing players place their sticks on the ground and then tap sticks once before going for the ball. It is normally taken when it is uncertain who to give the ball to after an incident.

Centre line: The line that divides the field in half.

Centre mark: The spot in the middle of the pitch where the ball is placed to start a half or following a goal.

Centre pass: A pass that starts a half or following a goal. A player passes the ball to a team-mate at least 1m away from him or her. The term is also called a push back or pass back.

Corner Hit: Is awarded to the offence when the defense unintentionally plays the ball over their own back-line.

Defender: A player stationed in the defensive end of the field who tries to defend plays by the Forwards (Attackers).

Dribble: Running or walking while controlling the ball with the stick. Stick-handling in Canadian terminology.

Goal-scoring circle (or circle or D): A D-shaped area in front of the goal. Also known as a striking circle or shooting circle. A goal can only be scored when the ball is in the circle and played by an attacker.

Flick or Scoop: When a player raises the ball into the air with the stick; also known as a scoop. In Indoor Hockey, a player is only allowed to flick the ball when within the Goal-scoring Circle and for a shot at goal.

Forward: A player positioned in the offensive end of the field who tries to score goals; also known as an attacker.

Free Hit: When a player commits an offence outside the Goal-scoring circle, the other team is awarded a Free Hit. The player taking the free hit may hit or push the ball. See [Self-pass](#).

Green card: The green card issued by the referee that gives a warning to the offending player for minor violations, such as body contact or a repeated infringement, like failing to keep a certain distance away on a free hit.

Hit: A hit is a swinging action where the stick makes direct contact with the ball. E.g. a long dragging motion along the floor or swinging directly at the ball from the air without a small sweeping motion.

Kicker: A protective piece of equipment worn by a goalkeeper that covers the front and side of the shoes and allows him or her to kick the ball.

Obstruction: An infraction called when players use their sticks or bodies to block other players from hitting the ball or when the goalkeeper lies on the ball.

Penalty corner: When a defending player intentionally hits the ball over the back-line or an unintentional foul is committed by the defender in the goal circle or an intentional foul is committed by a defender in their own half of the pitch. The ball is placed on the back-line 10m from the nearest goalpost, where the attacking team takes possession.

Penalty stroke: Similar to a penalty kick in soccer. The ball is placed 6.4m from the goal with only the goalkeeper defending. It is called when:

- The defending deliberately player fouls an attacking player attempting to score in the goal circle. Good examples are if defender hacks the attacker's stick or body checks the attacker (possible card too) or trips the attacker (possible card too)
- A defender commits an unintentional foul which prevents a goal. A good example is if the ball would have entered the goal but is stopped by the defender's foot.

Red card: The card issued by the referee, which ejects the offending player from the game. This occurs on intentional fouls, such as deliberate body contact, or verbal abuse of the officials. The offending player is also suspended from the team's following game. The player may also get a red card for a repeated infraction after having received a yellow card earlier.

Self-pass: When a team is awarded the ball after a foul, the player may choose to make a self-pass which allows him/her to carry the ball without having to pass it. The ball must also be stationary before the self-pass is started and the action of carrying the ball must be two separate actions so that it is clear to everyone that a self-pass is being taken and where it commenced.

Tackle: When a player attempts to steal the ball from an opponent.

Yellow card: A card issued by the referee which suspends the offending player for at least two minutes or longer depending on the referee's judgement on the severity of the foul, resulting in something similar to a power play in ice hockey, when the team plays short-handed. The card is issued for intentional fouls, such as rough play or stick checks. A player may also receive the card for a repeated offence after having received a green card earlier.

This is just a start. More to come....

If I haven't covered something or if you find a mistake in this document, contact the FHNS Administrative Coordinator at information@fieldhockey.ns.ca.