

The Language of the Game

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Like many sports, hockey is a sport rich with terms and language that help describe many of the particular aspects of the game. Below are listed a few of the terms you'll hear around the rink.

Altercation Any physical interaction between two or more opposing players that results in a penalty (or penalties) being assessed.

Assist An assist is credited to a player who helps set up a goal. Assists are awarded to the last man to handle the puck immediately preceding the goal. There is a maximum of two assists per goal.

Attacking zone When you are on the attack, your attacking zone is between your opponent's blue line and goal line.

Back check Forwards in their offensive zone skate back quickly to their own defensive zone to protect their goal and keep the opponent from shooting.

Blocker For the goalie, the glove that goes on the hand that holds the stick.

Blue line Two lines running across the width of the rink, one on either side of the red line. The area between the blue lines is called the neutral zone.

Boarding Violently checking an opponent into the boards from behind. Boarding is illegal and merits a penalty.

Boards The wall around a hockey rink (which was at one time really made of wood but which is now usually of fiberglass) measuring about 42 inches high and topped off by synthetic glass to protect the spectators while giving them a good view of the action.

Body check A body check is where you use your body against an opponent who has possession of the puck. Legal body checking must be done only with the hips or shoulders and must be above the opponent's knees and below the neck. Unnecessarily rough body checking is penalized.

Box A defensive alignment (similar to the diamond) often used by a team defending against a power play.

Breakaway A player in control of the puck has a breakaway when the only opponent between him and the opposition's goal is the goalie (and a reasonable scoring opportunity exists).

Breakout The play used by the attacking team to move the puck out of its own zone and up the ice toward the opponent's goal.

Butt ending Using the shaft of the stick to jab or attempt to jab an opposing player. Known in Quebec as "donner six pouces" (to give six inches).

Catcher For the goalie, this is a glove (which looks like a fancy first-baseman's mitt) that

goes on the non-stick hand.

Center In a traditional alignment with three forwards, the center plays between the left and right wings.

Changing on the fly When players from the bench substitute for players on the ice, while the clock is running.

Charging Taking more than three strides before deliberately checking an opponent.

Clearing the puck When the puck is passed, knocked, or shot away from the front of the goal net or other area.

Crease The semi-circular area in front of each goal is called the crease. If any offensive player is in the goal crease when a goal is scored, the goal is not allowed. The crease is painted blue. The goal crease is designed to protect the goalies from interference by attacking players. The area marked on the ice in front of the penalty timekeeper's seat is for the use of the referee.

Cross checking Hitting an opponent with the shaft of the stick while both hands are on the stick and no part of the stick is on the ice.

Defensive zone When the other team is on the attack, the defensive zone is the area between your goal line and your blue line.

Defensemen Two defensemen usually try to stop the opponent's play at their own blue line. The defensemen block shots and also clear the puck from in front of their goal. Offensively, defensemen take the puck up the ice or pass the puck ahead to the forwards; they then follow the play into the attacking zone and help keep it there.

Deke A deke is a fake by a player in possession of the puck in order to get around an opponent or to make a goalie move out of position. To deke, you move the puck or a part of your body to one side and then in the opposite direction. ("Deke" is taken from "decoy.")

Delay of game This is called when a player purposely delays the game. Delay of game is commonly called when a goalie shoots the puck into the stands without the puck deflecting off a skater or the glass. Delay of game also occurs when a player intentionally knocks a goalpost out of its stand (usually in an attempt to prevent a goal from being scored).

Delayed off-side In this situation, an attacking player has preceded the puck into the offensive zone (normally a case for off-side), but the defending team has gained possession of the puck and can bring it out of their defensive zone without any delay or contact with an opposing player.

Diamond A defensive alignment (similar to the box) often used by a team defending against a power play.

Dig An attempt to gain possession of the puck in the corners of the rink.

Directing the puck Changing the course of the puck in a desired direction by using the body, skate, or stick.

Dive When a player exaggerates being hooked or tripped in an attempt to draw a penalty.

Elbowing Using the elbow to impede or disrupt the opponent.

Empty net goal A goal scored against an opponent that has pulled the goalie.

Face-off The action of an official dropping the puck between the sticks of two opposing players to start play.

Five-hole The area in the opening between a goalie's leg pads.

Flat pass A pass where the puck remains on the surface of the ice.

Flex Hockey sticks come in different degrees of flex - medium, stiff, and extra stiff. A stronger player, who hits more powerful shots, usually wants a stiffer stick.

Flip pass A pass where the puck is lifted so that it goes over an opponent or his stick.

Forecheck Forwards forecheck by hurrying into the opponent's defensive zone to either keep the puck there or take it away.

Forward The center and the wings are traditionally considered to be the forwards.

Freezing the puck A player freezes the puck by holding it against the boards with the stick or skates. A goalie freezes the puck (when the opposition is threatening to score) by either holding the puck in the glove or trapping it on the ice. Note: A delay-of-game penalty can be called if the goalie freezes the puck when the opposition is not threatening.

Goal A goal is achieved when the entire puck crosses the goal line and enters the net. You can't deliberately kick it in or bat it in with a glove, although a goal is counted when a puck deflects off a player (but not off an official). A goal is worth one point.

Goaltender The goaltender's main job is to keep the puck from entering the goal net. The goaltender is also known as the goalie, the goalkeeper, or the netminder.

GP An abbreviation for "games played."

Hat trick A player who scores three goals in one game achieves a "hat trick."

Head butting Using the head while delivering a body check (head first) in the chest, head, neck, or back area; or using the head to strike an opponent.

Heel of the stick The point where the shaft of the stick and the bottom of the blade meet.

High sticking Carrying the stick above the shoulder to use against the opponent.

Holding Using your hands on an opponent or the opponent's equipment to impede your opponent's progress.

Hooking Applying the blade of the stick to any part of an opponent's body or stick and pulling or tugging with the stick in order to disrupt that opponent.

Icing An infraction called when a player shoots the puck from his side of the red line across the opponent's goal line. Play is stopped when an opponent (other than the goalie) touches the puck. The face-off is held in the offending team's end of the ice. A team that is shorthanded can ice the puck without being penalized.

Interference Making body contact with an opponent who does not have possession of the puck. Interference is also called when a player is standing in the crease or otherwise makes contact with the goaltender.

Kneeing Using the knee in an effort to impede or foul an opponent.

Linesman Two linesmen are used to call offside, offside passes, icing, and handle all face-offs not occurring at center ice. Although they don't call penalties, they can recommend to the referee that a penalty be called.

Neutral zone The central ice area between the two blue lines (neither the defending nor the attacking zone).

Offside A team is offside when a player crosses the attacking blue line before the puck does. A face-off then takes place just outside that blue line (in the offending player's defensive zone). The determining factor in most offside situations is the position of the skates: Both skates must be completely over the blue line ahead of the puck for the play to be offside.

Offside pass An offside pass (also known as a "two-line" pass) occurs when a member of the attacking team passes the puck from behind his own defending blue line to a teammate across the center red line. If the puck precedes the player across the red line, the pass is legal. Also, an attacking player may pass the puck over the center red line and the attacking blue line to a teammate if the puck precedes that teammate across the blue line. The face-off after an offside pass takes place at the spot where the pass originated.

One-timer Shooting the puck immediately upon receiving it without stopping it first. A one-timer is an effective way to beat the goalie before he can slide from one side of the crease to another.

Penalty A penalty is the result of an infraction of the rules by a player or team official. A penalty usually results in the removal of the offending player (or team official) for a specified period of time. In some cases, the penalty may be the awarding of a penalty shot on goal or the actual awarding of a goal.

Penalty killing When a team is shorthanded and attempts to prevent the opposition from scoring, this activity is known as "penalty killing."

Penalty-killing unit The group of players brought in by a shorthanded team in order to defend against a power play.

Penalty shot A penalty shot is awarded to an offensive player who - on a breakaway - is illegally checked or impeded. The puck is placed at the center face-off spot, and the player has a free try at the opposing goal with no other defenders on the ice besides the goalie.

PIM An abbreviation for "penalties in minutes" (penalty minutes accumulated).

Pipe The pipe is the goalpost, and if you hit a puck "between the pipes" you score a goal!

Point The point is the area just inside the opposition's blue line close to the boards on either side of the rink. A defenseman usually occupies this area when his team is in control of the puck in the opposition's defensive zone.

Poke check Trying to knock the puck away from an opponent by stabbing at it with the blade of the stick.

Possession of the puck The last player or goalie to make contact with the puck is the one who has possession. This definition includes a puck that is deflected off a player or any part of his equipment.

Power play When a team has more players on the ice than the opposition due to one or more penalties against the opposing team.

Pulling of the goalie A team that is losing will sometimes take their own goalie off the ice and use another forward. This situation occurs most frequently near the end of the game when a team is behind and needs some emergency offense.

Red line The line that divides the rink into two equal parts. This area is center ice.

Referee The referee supervises the game, calls the penalties, determines if goals are scored, and handles face-offs at center ice at the start of each period and after goals. The referee has the final decision over all other officials.

Roughing Engaging in fisticuffs (fighting) or shoving.

Save A shot blocked by the goalie - a shot that otherwise would have gone into the net!

Shadow When a player covers an opponent one-on-one everywhere on the ice in order to limit the effectiveness of this opponent.

Shoot-out Some minor and international leagues refine the overtime situation by having their teams play a five-minute sudden death period, and if no one scores, the game is decided by a shoot-out. Each team picks five players, and each one of them takes a penalty shot on the other team's goalie, skating in by themselves with the puck from center ice and trying to score. Whichever team scores more wins.

Shorthanded A shorthanded team is below the numerical strength of its opponents on the ice. When a goal is scored against a shorthanded team, the penalty that caused the team scored against to be shorthanded is terminated, and both teams are again at equal strength.

Slap shot A slap shot occurs when the player swings the stick back and then quickly forward, slapping the puck ahead with a forehand shot.

Slashing When a player swings the stick at an opponent. Slashing merits a penalty, whether contact is made or not. Tapping an opponent's stick not slashing.

Slot The prime scoring area up the middle of the ice, between the face-off circles. When you "clear the slot," you shove an opposing player out of the area in front of your goal.

Smothering the puck When a goalie or other players fall on the puck. Smothering is legal

when done by the goalie or accidentally by another player.

Sniper A player who is a pure goal scorer and who doesn't hit other players or the boards all that much.

Spearing Poking or attempting to poke an opponent with the tip of the blade of the stick while holding the stick with one or both hands.

Splitting the defense When a player in possession of the puck goes between two opposing defenders while attacking.

Stick-handling A term for carrying the puck along the ice with the stick.

Sweater The term used to designate a hockey jersey.

Sweep check Using the entire length of the stick with a sweeping motion along the surface off the ice in order to dislodge the puck from an opponent. A team that is shorthanded on a power play often employs a sweep check.

Team official A person responsible for the operation of a team, such as a coach, manager, or trainer.

Trap Traps are defensive formations designed to minimize the opposition's scoring opportunities and keep its offense from functioning. The idea is to trap the puck in the neutral zone, halting the opponents and regaining control of the puck.

Tripping Using a stick, arm, or leg to cause an opponent to trip or fall.

Turnover Just as in basketball or in football, you can make a turnover in hockey by losing control of the puck to the opposing team.

Two-line pass An offside pass (that actually crosses two lines).

Wings The left wing and the right wing (also known as forwards) move up and down the sides of the rink. Offensively, they skate on each side of the center, exchanging passes with him, while trying themselves for a shot on goal and/or a rebound of a shot from the point. Defensively, they watch the opponent's wings.

Wrist shot A wrist shot is used to shoot the puck off the blade of the stick with a flicking motion of the wrist.

Zamboni The vehicle used to prepare the rink's ice surface before the game and after each period. The Zamboni scrapes a thin layer off the ice, heats the ice, and puts down a fresh layer of heated water that freezes to form a new layer of ice.

