



US LACROSSE COACHING EDUCATION PROGRAM

Dodges in Girls Lacrosse

Introducing the Skill

The primary purpose of a dodge is to get past a defender.

This creates the time and space needed to move the ball to a teammate, shoot, or get open for a teammate by effectively eliminating a defender.

Dodging combines athleticism, stick work and footwork.

Dodging is not about making preconceived moves but, instead, “reading” the defense and adjusting in order to gain an advantage.

An offensive player’s job on the field is to go to goal; this means traveling **north** and **south** on the field.

Defensive players want to push the offense off course, in an **east-west** direction, which forces them away from goal.

Too often, if dodges aren’t executed correctly, the offensive players help defenders by moving themselves east-west. A player who properly executes her dodge doesn’t veer off her north-south course.

The main objective of a successful dodge is to get an opponent off balance, out of her defensive stance, and trailing the play.

Players can use change of speed, change of direction and quick movements of their head, shoulders and sticks to accomplish this.

Once an opponent is off balance, the ball carrier needs to get a step on her and then dodge to the opposite side.

When a player “sets up” her defender – when she gets a defender to bite on a move to the left – she creates an opportunity to beat the defender on her right side. Setting up a defender helps a ball carrier predict where the defense will move, so she can react accordingly. Most attackers want to set the defender up to commit to the attacker’s non-dominant side. This allows the attacker to play to her strength by finishing her dodge to her dominant hand, which often results in a stronger, more accurate pass or shot.





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Teaching the Skill: Dodging

To effectively execute dodges, the attacker needs to recognize how much time and space she needs for her footwork and stick work. Newer players need lots of feedback because they are more likely to attempt a dodge too far away or too close to a defender. If they attempt to dodge too far away from the defender, they will not eliminate their opponent. If they execute the dodge too close to the defender, they may actually lose possession by checking themselves as they collide with their defender or pull their stick into their opponent's stick.

Coaching Tip:

For proper stick protection when setting up a dodge, or executing a dodge, reinforce the “shoulder, shoulder, stick” principle. Always try to protect the stick with the shoulders.

All dodges need to include a change of speed.

While dodging, the offensive player must, at some point, change her pace to set her defender up or accelerate past her defender.

All dodges should conclude with the attacker returning to the same path that she was on (north/south) prior to dodging, effectively eliminating the defensive player by sealing her off.

The dodges covered in this lesson are the Face Dodge (or Pull Dodge) and the Roll Dodge.

Several more advanced dodges (Rocker Step, Split Dodge, etc.) are covered in Level 2; however, perfecting the Face Dodge and Roll Dodge gives players a solid base for developing more advanced dodges.

The Face Dodge or Pull Dodge:

The “face dodge” or “pull dodge” is the easiest to teach and learn. This dodge can be used in the midfield as well as in settled situations.

Set up the defender.

As the dodger approaches her defender, she wants to “set up” the defender by:

- Making a move and/or faking a pass or shot with a slight movement of her head and stick.
- Taking a jab step to one side or the other.





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Stick position

1. Keep two hands on the stick, with the stick positioned parallel to the body and off the right shoulder (for a right-handed player).
2. After the dodger sets the defender up, she pulls hard across her face to the opposite side, keeping the stick parallel to her body and protected from the defender. Remember the shoulder, shoulder, stick principle for protection.
3. When the dodger gets past the defender, keep the stick in the strong hand on the pull, and bring it back to the strong side.

Footwork

1. Jog at the defender's left shoulder to "set her up" with a jab step, fake pass or shot.
2. When within a stick's length of the defender, the dodger plants her right foot (for a right-hander player), pulls her stick hard across her face protecting the stick with her shoulders and explodes past the defender's right shoulder. She can take the smallest step to the side (east-west) with her left foot in order to achieve her goal of moving upfield, with a powerful next step in the north-south direction.
3. As soon as the dodger gets a step ahead of the defender, she cuts off the defender by staying the north-south course on which she approached the defender, leaving the defender behind her.

Coaching Tip:

Imagine that the offensive player is on a set of railroad tracks. She approaches the defender, dodges off the tracks and then seals the defender off by getting back on the tracks and using a tight cradle while leading with her stick. A dodge is truly effective only when a defender is left with a view of the dodger's back.

Lead with the stick

1. After the dodger explodes past the defender, she holds her stick in front of her shoulders for protection, sensing that the defender is recovering and still a threat. She keeps her stick in front of her, in between her shoulders, until open space is gained and she can pass or shoot.

The pull dodge can be executed with the right or left hand leading the dodge. Encourage players to practice this skill with their dominant hand and then their non-dominant hand.





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Roll Dodge:

1. The roll dodge is mainly used in settled situations.
2. Players can roll dodge to the left or right, depending on field position and whether they are right- or left-handed.
3. As with all dodges, the dodger wants to “set up” the defender by faking a move, a pass or a shot with a jab step or a slight movement of her head, shoulders or stick.
4. This often causes defenders to raise their stick and straighten up, taking them out of their defensive stance.

Stick position

The dodger keeps both hands on the stick as she approaches the defender, with her stick positioned parallel to the body and off the right shoulder (for a right-handed player). Remember shoulder, shoulder, stick to protect the ball.

Footwork

1. On the approach (for a right-handed dodger), the dodger moves to the defender’s left shoulder to “set her up” with a jab step, fake pass or shot.
2. When the dodger is within a stick’s length of the defender, she plants her left foot (for a right-hander player) in front of and in between the defender’s feet.
3. The planted left foot is the pivot foot; the right foot moves.
4. The dodger rolls to her right, swinging her back foot around the defender.
5. As the dodger rolls to her right, she keeps her back to the defender and her stick in between her shoulders.
6. The right foot now is to the side and slightly behind the defender as the roll is completed; and the dodger explodes forward with her left foot, while cutting off the defender with her body.

Lead with your stick

1. As the dodger explodes past the defender, she keeps her stick in front of her shoulders and protected.
2. The stick remains in front until open space is gained and she can pass or shoot.





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Error Detection and Correction

Error:

The ball is dropped when performing the face dodge.

Correction:

Be sure the top hand is relaxed as the player pulls across her face.

Check that both arms are moving together when the stick is pulled to the opposite side of the body.

Error:

The defender checks the ball out of the stick.

Correction:

During a roll dodge, make sure that the player steps around – not just beside – her opponent.

Make sure the body is between the defender and the stick at all times to maximize stick protection.

Make sure the player accelerates after the dodge and seals off her opponent leading with her stick.

