



Special Olympics

FLOOR HOCKEY COACHING GUIDE

Floor Hockey Rules, Protocol & Etiquette



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Teaching Floor Hockey Rules

Good coaches begin teaching floor hockey rules the minute the athletes step into the first training of the season. The head coach should begin the season with a meeting for all athletes, coaches and parents/guardians. The head coach should be prepared to discuss the upcoming season and his/her expectations concerning the athletes' behavior during the season. The coach must establish an expectation of good sportsmanship and good participation by each and every athlete in the program for the entire season. Teaching the rules of floor hockey begins at this meeting. A general discussion of the rules of floor hockey may be included; however, teaching the rules will be a process that happens during each and every training.

The coach should begin training by having athletes put on their "mandatory equipment." This is the first opportunity to begin teaching the rules. Mandatory equipment is just what it says: **mandatory** under the rules. This includes, at a minimum, a helmet (with a full face mask) and shin guards. Recommended equipment also includes gloves, elbow pads and kneepads. No activity should be undertaken until the athletes have their equipment on. This will send a message that safety is the most important factor for everyone in the program. It will also force the athletes to become comfortable competing while wearing their equipment. This will set the tone for the season. It is up to the coaching staff, however, to be consistent throughout the season and maintain the expectations set during this opening meeting.

Rules for Floor Hockey Competition

Injuries can occur in floor hockey, and a majority of these injuries are caused by the floor hockey stick. The floor hockey stick is also the cause of the majority of penalties received in competition. There are no statistics to know the percentage of injuries caused by the illegal use of the stick versus inadvertent injuries that happen during normal play. What is known is that if the coaches are diligent with their players during training, many of these injuries and the related penalties can be avoided.

For example, training begins with the athletes warming up and stretching. Athletes should begin jogging (walking is acceptable depending on ability level) around the training facility with their equipment on and carrying a floor hockey stick. This will give each athlete the opportunity to become familiar with carrying / using the stick properly. It will also give you, as the coach, the chance to re-enforce the proper use of the stick, including the grip, using two hands and carrying the stick with the tip as low to the ground as possible when not in the process of shooting. Teaching the athletes to know what they are doing with their sticks at all times will avoid injuries and unnecessary penalties in the future.

The most common penalties called are for the improper use of the stick: high sticking, slashing, charging and tripping. High sticking is the most strictly called rule in floor hockey because of the injuries that can occur. However, each of the stick penalties can and do cause injuries.

A high sticking penalty occurs when the stick is at or above a player's shoulder. The stick must be held below shoulder level at all times. The athletes should be taught to keep the tip of their sticks as low to the ground as possible at all times. The only time the stick should go above waist level is on the follow-through when shooting or in some instances when passing the puck.

The slashing penalty is caused when an athlete slashes down or across with the stick in an attempt to gain possession of the puck from the opposing player. The correct method to take possession of the puck is a technique called a stick check.

Charging penalties occur when an athlete holds the stick in both hands and runs into the opposing player in an attempt to move him/her away from the puck.

The tripping penalty may or may not be caused by use of the stick. Many tripping penalties are called when a player puts the stick between the opposing player's legs and causes the player to trip.

If coaches are diligent about teaching the proper use of the stick at each and every training session, you will notice fewer penalties and greater stick and puck control demonstrated by your athletes. Teaching floor hockey rules should become an integral part of training.



There are many other rules that should be taught during training. Some examples include:

1. Proper face-off techniques
2. The goal crease
3. Proper stick checking techniques
4. Proper body checking
5. Interference



Special Olympics Unified Sports® Rules

There are few differences in the general Floor Hockey rules for Special Olympics Unified Sports® competition, as stipulated in the official *Special Olympics Sports Rules*. The differences are highlighted below:

1. A roster consists of a proportionate number of athletes and partners. The goal of Unified Sports Floor Hockey is to field a team that consists of an equal number of Special Olympics athletes and partners of equal playing ability who compliment each other to form a team.
2. During competition, the line-up can contain no more than three partners on the court at any time. By the end of game, equal playing rules as stated in the rules (Section E, 1) shall apply.
3. Team sports must have an adult, non-playing coach. Player-coaches are not allowed in team sports.

Protest Procedures

Protest procedures are governed by the rules of competition and may change from competition to competition. Only rules violations can be protested. Judgment calls made by officials or divisioning decisions cannot be protested. The protest must site specific violations from the rulebook and a clear definition of why the coach feels the rule was not followed.

The role of the competition management team is to enforce the rules. As a coach, your duty to your athletes and team is to protest any action or events while your athlete is competing that you think violated the Official Floor Hockey Rules. It is extremely important that you do not make protests because you and your athlete did not get your desired outcome of an event. Protests are serious matters that impact a competition's schedule. Check with the competition team prior to competition to learn the protest procedures for that competition.



Floor Hockey Protocol & Etiquette

The establishing of proper protocols and etiquette at both training and competition is an important point from which to begin teaching sportsmanship. Being polite and respectful will set a proper example from which the athletes can learn.

During Training

For Coaches

- ♦ Arrive at training facility 15 minutes before the scheduled start time
- ♦ Come prepared to coach; know and understand the rules
- ♦ Ensure that athletes are wearing proper equipment before training begins
- ♦ Ensure that athletes participate in warm-ups, stretching and drills
- ♦ Have a copy of an up-to-date medical for every athlete
- ♦ Treat all athletes in the same manner
- ♦ Speak calmly when giving instructions or corrections
- ♦ Call players by their first names
- ♦ Maintain a calm and pleasant demeanor
- ♦ Listen to both athletes and parents when they have concerns
- ♦ Answer the athletes' questions in a respectful and reassuring tone
- ♦ Treat others as you would wish to be treated
- ♦ Set rules and expectations for all athletes and coaches

For Athletes

- ♦ Come prepared and on time to training
- ♦ Notify coach if not able to attend training
- ♦ Wear proper clothing for training (athletic shoes and properly fitted clothing)
- ♦ Give your best effort during training
- ♦ Notify coach of illness or injury



During Competition

For Coaches

- ◆ Ensure that you bring enough equipment
- ◆ Know where athletes are during the competition
- ◆ Get paperwork done on time or early (score sheets, etc.)
- ◆ Review all competition rules and procedures
- ◆ Attend all coaches meetings
- ◆ Encourage your athletes to play to the best of their ability at all times
- ◆ Practice the Honest Effort Rule
- ◆ Ensure athletes are wearing proper equipment and attire before competition begins
- ◆ Have a copy of an up-to-date medical for every athlete
- ◆ Treat all competition staff with respect; remember, they are also volunteers
- ◆ Maintain a calm demeanor throughout the competition
- ◆ Never use foul language or raise your voice in an angry tone
- ◆ Thank the competition staff and officials
- ◆ Set rules and expectations for all athletes and coaches

For Athletes

- ◆ Come prepared and on time to competition
- ◆ Notify coach if not able to attend competition
- ◆ Wear proper clothing to compete in (athletic shoes and properly fitted clothing)
- ◆ Give your best effort during the competition

Coaching Tips

- Use positive reinforcement when speaking to athletes
- Teach waiting one's turn during drills
- Teach good sportsmanship at all times
- Teach shaking hands at the end of all competitions
- Encourage athletes to cheer on teammates during training and competition



Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is both the coaches' and athletes' commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as fairness, respect for one's opponent and graciousness in winning or losing. It is those qualities that are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes. Lead by example.

Competitive Effort

- Put forth maximum effort during each event (especially seeding games).
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition.
- Always compete at your best level during a competition, whether you are winning or losing: Never quit.

Fair Play at All Times

- Always comply with the rules.
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
- Respect the decision of the officials at all times.

Expectations of Coaches

- ♦ Always set a good example for athletes and fans to follow.
- ♦ Instruct athletes in proper sportsmanship responsibilities and demand that they make sportsmanship and ethics the top priorities.
- ♦ Respect judgment of event officials, abide by rules of the event and display no behavior that could incite fans.
- ♦ Treat opposing coaches, directors, athletes and fans with respect.
- ♦ Shake hands with officials and the opposing coach in public both before and after the game.
- ♦ Develop and enforce penalties for athletes who do not abide by sportsmanship standards.
- ♦ Comply with Honest Effort Rule (team is playing to highest level possible at all times).
- ♦ Ensure that the team is seeded properly to ensure fair competition. Teams can be disqualified if this rule is not complied with.

Expectations of Athletes & Partners in Unified Sports®

- ♦ Treat teammates with respect.
- ♦ Encourage teammates when they make a mistake.
- ♦ Treat opponents with respect: Shake hands prior to and after contests.
- ♦ Respect judgment of contest officials, abide by rules of the contest and display no behavior that could incite fans.
- ♦ Cooperate with officials, coaches or directors and fellow athletes to conduct a fair contest.
- ♦ Do not retaliate (verbally or physically) if the other team demonstrates poor behavior.
- ♦ Accept seriously the responsibility and privilege of representing Special Olympics.
- ♦ Define winning as doing your personal best.
- ♦ Live up to the high standard of sportsmanship established by your coach.



Coaching Tips

- Discuss floor hockey sportsmanship, controlling temper and behavior at all times.
- Give sportsmanship awards or recognition after each competition or training.
- Always commend the athletes when they demonstrate sportsmanship.
- Respect other teams by not running up the score.
- Teach your athletes to respect their opponents and themselves.
- Teach your athletes to always stay under control, especially if they are feeling mad or angry.
- Teach your athletes to celebrate their accomplishments, but never in a taunting manner.
- Teach your athletes to always congratulate their opponents, win or lose.



Floor Hockey Attire

Appropriate floor hockey attire is required for all competitors. As a coach, discuss the types of sport clothes that are acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. Discuss the importance of wearing properly fitted clothing, along with the advantages and disadvantages of certain types of clothing worn during training and competitions. A coach should set the example by wearing appropriate attire to training and competitions.



Shirts

For training, the athlete should wear a T-shirt that is comfortable and allows freedom of movement in the shoulders. For competition, the athlete should wear a clean uniform shirt that has a number on the back (see rules for proper numbering of uniforms). All shirts should be long enough to keep tucked into the athlete's shorts/ pants.

Pants/ Shorts

Coaches should encourage athletes to wear appropriate athletic attire such as sweatpants, warm-up pants or shorts. For example, jeans or jean shorts are not proper floor hockey attire for either training or competition. Explain that the athletes should not perform while wearing jeans that restrict their movement.

Shoes and Socks

Probably the most important article of clothing an athlete wears when playing floor hockey is properly fitting shoes. High-top basketball or athletic shoes are recommended because they provide the athlete with the best foot and ankle support. A cushioned insole and good arch and heel support are things to look for in a quality athletic shoe. Make sure laces are laced to the top. Discourage black-soled shoes that may leave marks on the playing surface. Socks should be worn to help prevent blisters.

Outerwear

The athlete should wear appropriate outerwear for warming up before, and for staying warm after, a floor hockey training or game. Teams sometimes wear warm-up pants during a game for more protection. A medium-weight cotton sweatshirt and sweatpants are excellent and inexpensive outerwear. Encourage your athletes to bring appropriate outerwear that may keep them warm after training.



Floor Hockey Equipment

The sport of floor hockey requires the type of sporting equipment described below. It is recommended that programs provide equipment that is in good working order, a minimum of one per athlete and if possible an adequate number of spares. Equipment should be checked regularly for damage and replaced as needed.



Helmets (Mandatory)

The most important piece of protective equipment a hockey player wears is a floor hockey helmet. The helmet must cover the entire head with a full mask. It is mandatory for all players. A chinstrap is necessary. The helmet must be worn at ALL times during training and competition, and it should fit snugly (not too tight, not too loose).



Shin Guards (Mandatory)

Floor hockey shin guards come in three styles: sponge padding that slides into the socks (not recommended), an ankle wrap with plastic sleeve inserts or a full-length knee-to-ankle shin guard. Higher skill level teams should use the full-length knee-to-ankle shin guard.





Gloves

Street hockey/ roller hockey style gloves with padding on tops of fingers and hand are strongly recommended to prevent hand injuries from sticks. Higher skill level teams should consider making gloves mandatory for their athletes.



Elbow pads/ Kneepads

Protective equipment consisting of a pad worn over the elbow or knee by floor hockey athletes.



Goalie Equipment

Goalie equipment includes a regulation ice/street/roller hockey goalie stick. The goalie is also required to wear a goalie helmet with full face mask. A goalie is allowed to wear regulation-size ice/street/roller hockey goalie pads and gloves or some reasonable facsimile thereof (e.g., cricket pads, baseball catcher's glove). Goalie pads cannot be any larger than regulation ice hockey pads. Goalies need proper equipment, and the equipment must fit well. The style of equipment chosen depends on individual preference.





Sticks

Floor hockey sticks are rods or dowels of uniform thickness. Sticks consist of wood and/or fiberglass with a circumference from 7.5cm to 10cm (3 to 4 inches) and length from 90cm to 150cm (3 to 5 feet). The floor end of the stick is rounded. No tape, string or other object is allowed that increases the diameter of the bottom of the stick. Some sticks have a felt tip on the end of the stick to lessen friction between the stick and the playing surface and to prevent damage to wooden playing surfaces.





Pucks

Floor hockey pucks are “donut” shaped felt pucks with a center hole of 10cm (4 inches), a diameter of 20cm (8 inches), a thickness of 2.5cm (1inch) and a weight of 140 to 225 grams (5 to 8 ounces).



Goals/ Nets

Floor hockey goals are 1.8 meters wide, 1.2 meters high and .6 meters deep (6 x 4 x 2 feet). The sides and back of a goal should have appropriate netting. Regulation ice/street/roller hockey nets are also permitted. See supplier list below.



Additional Equipment

Instructional equipment may be needed during the course of a floor hockey training program. The coach will find some of this equipment essential to teach the skills effectively:

- Whistles
- Cones or pylons
- Stopwatches and/or electric timers
- Equipment bags
- Tape (floor tape, masking tape and/or duct tape)
- Scrimmage vests
- Clipboards
- Pens/pencils or felt tip markers
- Labels (to label athletes' helmets with their names)



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- Minor tools (screwdriver, pliers etc.)
- First aid kit

There are many ice/street/roller hockey companies that provide equipment that meets the requirements stated above. The following websites are good resources for locating much of the equipment required:

1. Mylec Inc. sells a full range of hockey equipment. <http://www.mylec.com/player.htm>
2. Hockey Giant <http://www.hockeygiant.com/>
3. Bron Tapes is a good supplier of floor marking tapes in a variety of colors and widths.
<http://www.brontapes.com>
4. Slik Stik Floor Hockey Sticks
9 Windham Dr.
North York, Ontario, Canada
M2K 1X7
(416) 224-5002
Supplies regulation floor hockey sticks with felt tips, replacement felt tips and floor hockey pucks.

The four companies mentioned above are good resources; however, it is strongly recommended that you do research to find the equipment you need at the best prices.



Floor Hockey Glossary

Term	Definition
Backhand Pass	Passing puck by moving stick across the body with palm of bottom hand going in the backward direction (pull with bottom hand).
Backhand Shot	Shot made with the stick from the left side by a right-handed player or from the right side by a left-handed player.
Boards	The wall or boundaries around a floor hockey rink.
Body Check	Placing yourself between your opponent and the puck to gain advantage while both players have their sticks in the puck. Usually done by the defensive player to the offensive player. Body check does not involve hard physical contact between the players.
Charging	Running, jumping into or colliding into an opponent who has a clearly established position, regardless of whether either player has the puck.
Clearing the Puck	When an athlete gets the puck out of his or her own defensive zone.
Cross Checking	When a player holds the stick horizontally and shoves another player with it.
Defense	Players trying to prevent the other team from scoring.
Deflection	Changing the direction of shot with stick or body.
Face-off	The method of starting play; the dropping of the puck by the official between the sticks of two opposing players standing one stick length apart; used to begin each period or to resume play when it has stopped for other reasons.
Fake	Pretending to shoot in one direction and actually shooting in another direction.
Fast Break	Offensive strategy in which a team attempts to bring the puck into scoring position before the defense can set up.
Floor	Playing area that may be a gymnasium or other smooth, hard surface.
Forehand Pass	Passing puck by moving stick across the body with palm of bottom hand going in forward direction (pushing with bottom hand).
Forehand Shot	Shot made with the stick from the right side of a right-handed player or from the left side of a left-handed player.
Foul	Infraction that causes a stoppage of play without causing a penalty.
Give-and-Go	Passing to teammate and receiving a return pass down court.
Goal/ Net	The informal term used to refer to the area made up of the goalposts and the net guarded by the goalie and into which a puck must enter to score a point.
Goal Crease	Area for the goalie that is defined by a line on the court (goalies must remain inside this area and all other players outside of this area).
Goal Scoring	Act of the puck passing completely over the goal line into the goal/ net.
Goalie	Player in goal crease trying to prevent the other team from scoring.
Goalie Pads	Pads or protective equipment worn by the goalie.



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Goalie Stick	Stick for the goalie only (a regulation ice/street/roller hockey goalkeeper's stick is acceptable).
Helmet	A hard, plastic-type hat with chin strap. All players are required to have a full face mask.
High Sticking	Carrying the stick above shoulder level.
Holding	Impeding the progress of an opponent.
Interference	Impeding or preventing the progress of an opponent who is not in possession of the puck.
Jersey	A uniform shirt numbered on the back.
Lift Shot	A shot in which the puck rises off the floor.
Offense	Players trying to score goals using various passing combinations and shots.
Overtime	Continuation of a tied game after regulation play.
Pass	Advancing the puck to a teammate.
Penalty	An infraction of any rule resulting in a 1-minute penalty (minor), 2-minute penalty (major) or game expulsion.
Position Player	Forwards, center, defense and goalie.
Puck	A felt disk shaped like a donut.
Rebound	When a puck bounces off the goalie's body or equipment or off the goal posts.
Referee	On-court official who is in charge of the game and who calls penalties.
Roughing	Using any part of the body, such as elbow, to hit or modify the direction of an opponent.
Screen	Standing in the line of sight between puck and goalie.
Shooting	Shooting the puck at the goal.
Shooting Angle	The angle determined by the position of the shooting player in relation to the goal at the moment he or she shoots the puck.
Stick	Rod or dowel with rounded tip on bottom used to control puck.
Stick Check	Lifting an opponent's stick out of the puck.
Stick Handling	Controlling and moving the puck with a stick.
Switching	Player moving to another player's position.
Tripping	Causing an opponent to fall or stumble by using a stick or any part of the body.
Wall Passing	Using the boards to assist with passing.

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