

DISTRICT 9 HOCKEY

Competitive skill work

Hockey requires many skills, but they can be grouped in three basic categories:

- Skating skills—getting around the ice
- Puck skills—taking care of the puck
- Game skills—reading and reacting, on offense or defense, to the constantly changing situation

Learning skills doesn't have to involve drudgery and drills—it can be done with a number of high-quality reps of specific skills to develop muscle memory and groove the particular movement or process, then reinforcing the skill in a competitive situation.

Stations—

- build the skill by teaching proper technique of a specific skill
- groove it by quality reps of the skill

Progressions—

- integrate the skill by adding a skating or puck skill with it

Competitions—

- test mastery of the skill by using it in a competition that adds fun and tactical ability

Level 1 Competitions:

- Races (versus opponent or clock)—working on any skating or agility skill
- Obstacle courses—working on any skating or agility skill
- Mirror—stopping or turning or forward/backward transitions vs. a partner
- Circle races—turning, speed, strength on skates in groups of 3-4
- [Bumper Cars](#)—strength on skates, use of edges, getting low
- [Backward Chase](#)—backward speed and agility
- Ships Across the Ocean—listening/reacting, agility
- Pom-Pom—elusiveness, speed
- Torpedo—elusiveness, speed
- [Gap Chase](#)—for defensive skating and coverage

Level 2 Competitions (in addition to all Level 1 with a stick):

- Stick Wrestling—strength on skates, grip, balance
- Protect the Dot—strength and agility on skates, anticipate puck protection

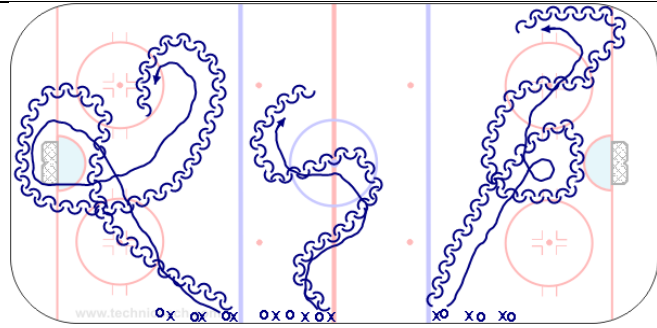
Level 3 Competitions (in addition to all Level 1 and 2):

- [Pass-shot drill](#)—reading, passing, shooting
- Puck or passing races—any puck skills
- Scoring races—puckhandling, passing, shooting, deking
- 2-2 confined space w/coach—reading/reacting, passing, shooting, skating
- [Small Area Games](#)—(<http://www.atougherhockey.com/pdf/Coachsplaybook.pdf>)game skills
- [Ricky Bobby](#)—reading, defending, attacking, odd-man situations
- [Larry Robinson](#)—Game skills, point skills
- [Brett Hull](#)—Puck control, quick shot, activation

This list is hardly all-inclusive. If you get a bit creative, you can come up with a competition for any skill that makes working on it fun and productive and teaches game skills as well.

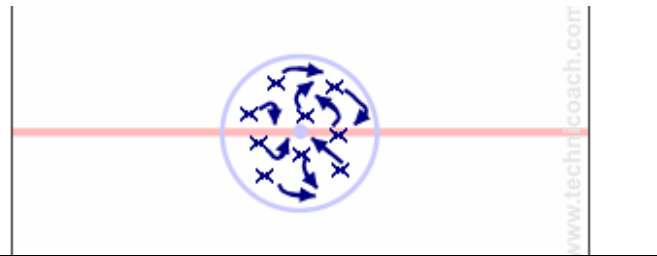
Some basic District 9 Hockey drills

1. **Backward chase**—players pair up with players of comparable ability, leave sticks at boards and form lines at blue lines and red line at boards—within one zone, one player skates backwards, trying to escape his partner, who attempts to touch his forehead to his partner's chest three times in 25-30 seconds. Player must stay within whichever zone he starts. Can include push-ups after each contest; offer the reward of being excused from push-ups for anyone who either remains untouched when chased or catches their partner three times when chasing. Players must stay within zone to earn reward. Discourage use of arms—all about turning quickly and MOVING to elude chaser. **Option: Gap Chase:** one player defends a spot by facing an attacker while maintaining a stick-length gap.

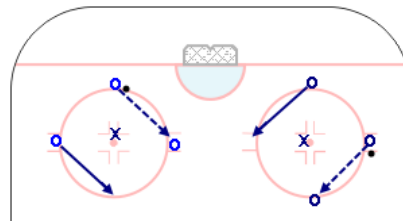


Regardless of where in the zone the attacker goes, the defender must face him, stay close, and stay between him and the spot being defended.

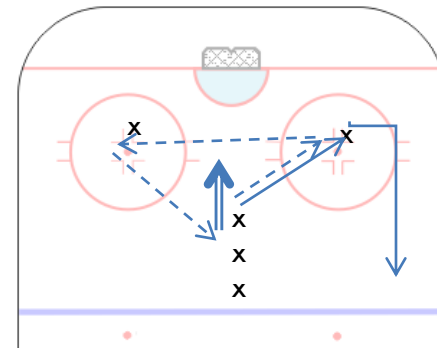
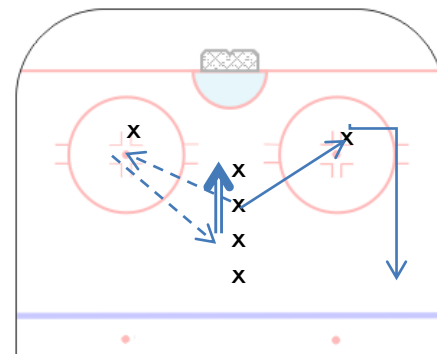
2. **Bumper cars**—In circle or confined space, no sticks, players mill about with hands on knees. No going outside zone, taking hand off knee, or picking foot off ice. Bump into others by getting under them and popping up, not lunging off-balance. Last one standing wins. Good test of balance, strength on skates, and ability to keep center of gravity directly above feet. Anyone who breaks one of the rules has to wait on one knee outside the circle until the next contest.



3. **Square Pass**—Four players and one puck in square around a circle—one at top, one at bottom, and one on either hashmark; one player gets puck and opposite player becomes defender in middle—object is to support the puck carrier at right angles—not across circle but to either side of puck carrier, and to react to passes and provide support to new position on circle. If player in middle gets puck due to bad pass, passer goes to middle.



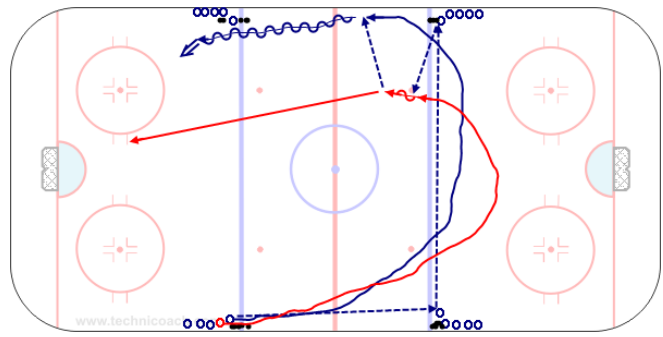
4. **Pass-Shot**—start with one line of players and pucks at the top of the circles facing the net, one player facing the line from just below either dot. First player in line starts the drill by taking a shot, which all three players rebound, then return to their spots. When everyone is back in position, the first player in line passes a puck to either of the two dot players and immediately skates straight at one or the other of them and takes his place. Whoever is replaced at the dot goes back to the end of the line. The two dot players have to get the puck to the next player in line without passing it through the first shooter. When the puck gets to the next player in line, he or she shoots it immediately and plays the rebound, along with the two dot players. The upper diagram shows the first player in line passing to one dot player and replacing the other—in this case, the dot player who gets the puck can pass directly back to the next player in line for the shot. The lower diagram shows the first player in line passing to one dot player and replacing the same dot player—in this case, the dot player who gets the pass has to pass to his partner the other dot player to get the puck back to the next player in line for the shot. It's OK to wait until everybody's back in place and ready after the initial shot, because action should be continuous after next step until the next shot is rebounded.



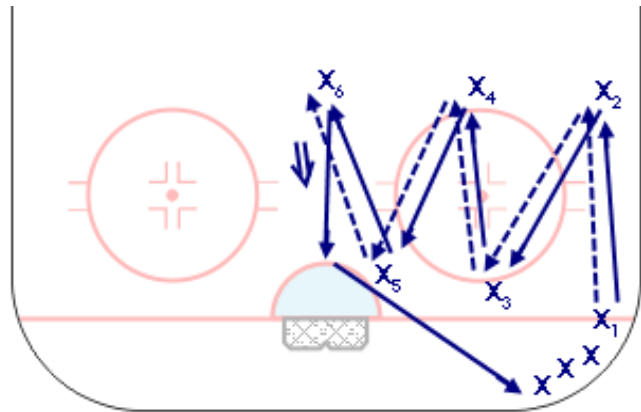
Emphasis:

Once the passes begin, keep the puck moving quickly until the shot is finished. Catch the puck where you can move it immediately, and keep your head up to find the passing or shooting lane. Feature your forehand—should be tic-tac-toe puck movement.

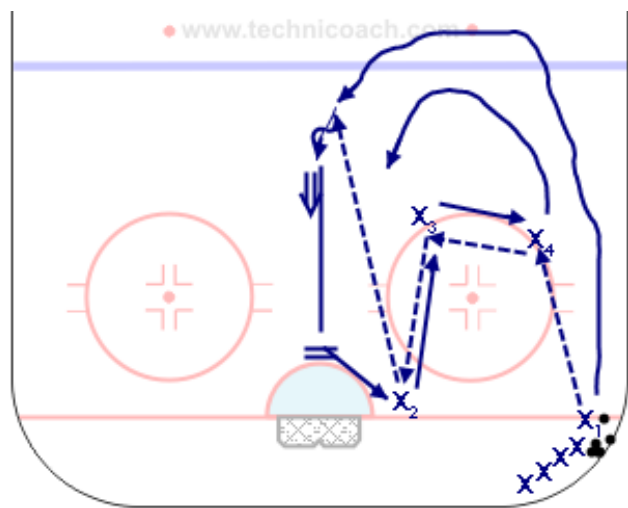
5. **Eggbeater**—start with players in four lines along boards at all four bluelines, facing neutral zone—at signal, first player in one line passes along the boards to first player in the line that's facing him, then skates in loop through neutral zone, starting along boards and circling to far side—from second line, puck goes across ice to second player in line diagonally opposite original line, player there passes to original player circling through, who continues through neutral zone and shoots on goal in original end. Where things get complicated: players diagonally across from each other are starting at the same time, and they are responsible for communicating across ice and starting together. Once the drill has been completed by one pair of diagonal opposites, the other pair of diagonal opposites start. Easier to play traffic cop on this one, but far more valuable for players to learn to communicate and run it themselves. Can also become 1-1, 2-0, 2-1, 3-2.



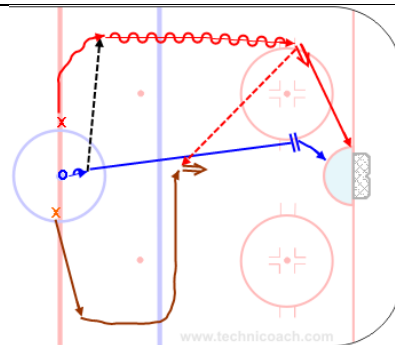
6. **UND**—Start with players in corner, with one player at sideboards and top of the circle, one player at bottom of circle, one at top of circle, one next to net, and one in the slot at top of circle. Player in corner passes to player on side boards and immediately sprints to take his place, player on sideboards passes to bottom of circle and takes his place and so on until puck has zigzagged out to player in slot who shoots, follows shot to the net, and gets back in line. No stickhandling and no slapping the puck—work on catching the puck in the sweet spot of the stick near the heel, then pass and Move, don't straighten legs. Great opportunity to show habit of standing up instead of moving, and the practice of quick release when shooting from the slot. Next player from corner starts a new set of passes when the previous one gets to the middle player at top of circle.



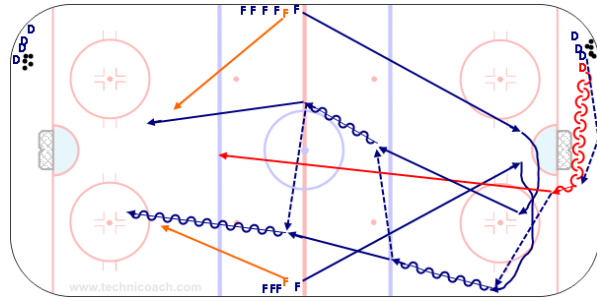
7. **Czech Drill**—Line w/pucks in corner, two players across top of circle and one at bottom of circle near net; first player in corner passes along boards to player at top of circle, then skates along boards, out around neutral zone face-off dot, and back into the zone, watching the progress of the puck all the way, and timing it so that he is accelerating into the high slot as the puck returns to him. From first pass, puck is passed on from boards to mid-ice high circle to mid-ice low circle, and back to the high slot where the original skater is coming in for a shot. All of these passes are short, but they must be firm and accurate and without stickhandling. After the play is made, the shooter takes the place of the low circle player, who moves up to replace mid-ice upper circle player, who moves over to replace sideboard upper circle player, who follows original skater and rebounds. Key to effective use of drill is quick, accurate passing; good timing on the part of the shooter as he watches the passing play develop in the zone; and moving quickly after each pass is made.



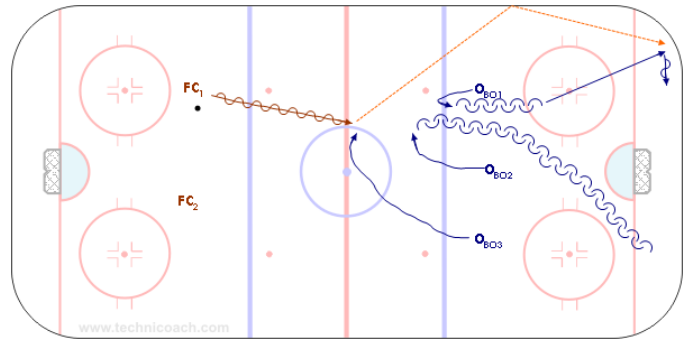
8. **Flare pass 3-0 attack**—Line along center redline, w/first player at hashmark facing side boards and following players behind, toward center ice dot. At signal, first player flares wide, turns toward blue line, calls for puck, catches pass, drives to top of circles, and fires quick wrist shot just above goalie's stick blade while charging to the net; second player passes puck wide and stays even with first player, stays on-side, and drives to the strong side hashmark with stick down, looking for rebound; third player cuts wide, crosses blue line and turns in to high slot for possible pass. Can add 1 or 2 defenders to this basic attack.



9. **2-1 continuous**—forwards on either sideboard at redline, defense with pucks at either end. First forward from each side skates toward the North net, at whistle, both break out with pass from North d who follows play up ice; when the two forwards cross the center redline, the next player on both sides chases as a backchecker; play continues into South zone with shot/rebound/battle, until next whistle, when two attacking forwards clear the zone and get back in line, new defenseman from South end starts new breakout with two previous backchecking forwards, who attack to the North against the previous trailing D; South D follows up play, and when two new attacking forwards cross center redline, first forward in both lines gives chase as new backchecker. Keys—D starts from line by skating backward behind net and getting a pass from the next player in the D line—should be off the boards; two forwards support the breakout to whichever side of the zone the puck is, one f on board hashmarks, the other coming through at center slightly lower in the zone than the wing—both must present themselves to the puck and create good passing angles, and then move puck early to get defender and goalie moving side to side; defender who makes the breakout pass should jump up into the play.

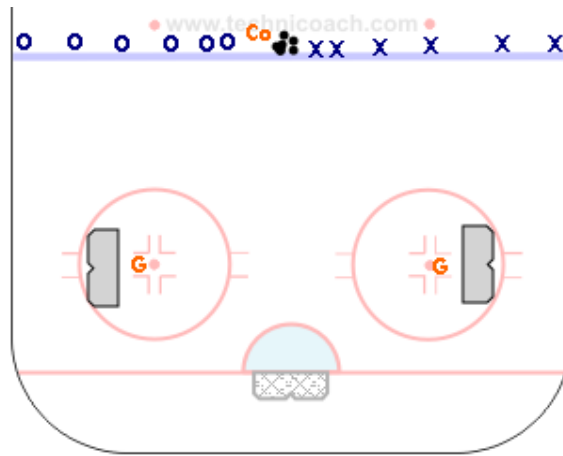


10. **Breakout 3-2**—coach has pucks in penalty box semicircle, players in line along boards behind redline, goalies in both nets, 3 players milling about between red and blue line on one half of neutral zone, 2 players milling about between red and blue lines on other half of NZ. Coach sends puck into zone (players must be watching puck to see when play starts, and goalie must try to set up puck if possible), and the three try to break out against the two. If two touch puck before three carry it beyond center line, 3 must do push-ups—look back over shoulder when retrieving puck, block out forecheckers then jump to support if not carrying puck, find the open player, and make the easy play.

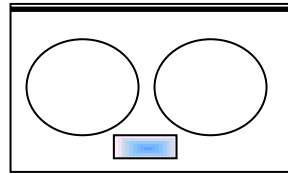


Variation: Ricky Bobby 2-3 or 3-4—2-3: two players mill around with a puck at one end, three players mill around at the other end. When the two attacking players cross their own blue line into the neutral zone, the three defending players may enter the neutral zone to stop them. The two attacking players must get the puck deep into the zone, either by carrying, passing, or as a last resort, dumping it. The three defending players must gain the puck and attack. Penalties (10 push-ups) for the 2 attackers: icing or failure to get the puck deep into the zone; for the 3 defenders: allowing the attackers to enter the zone with the puck (double push-ups for allowing a shot from inside the zone, triple pushups for giving up a goal), or, once the puck has been recovered deep in the zone, either icing the puck the other way or allowing the 2 attackers to touch the puck before the 3 advance it beyond the center line. 3-on-4 is the same drill, just adding a player to each team.

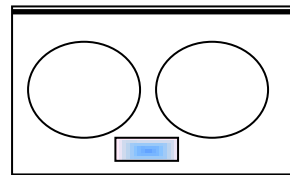
11. **2-2 cross-ice**—players in two teams along the blue line, coach with pucks between the two teams; goalies in the nets facing each other, back of net on edge of circle; coach dumps puck in, both teams send two players after it. 30-45 second shifts. Variations: score in either net, which allows team on offense to go anywhere in zone to protect puck—go away from pressure—and forces D team to protect center alley where good angle shots are, or play in one direction only; on each goal, coach dumps in new puck immediately, or if “make it-take it,” passes immediately to scoring team—high intensity, short duration; nets facing each other or nets closer together facing away from each other; 2-2 or 3-3; must pass first or don’t have to. Other conditions can be added, depending on what team needs to work on—must pass between sets of tires, must control puck certain amount of time before shot, must make certain number of passes, must pass off the boards, etc.



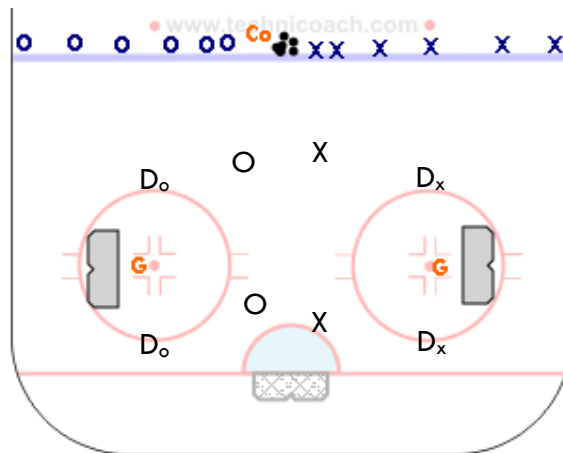
12. **3-3 1/2 w/coach**—Same set-up as cross ice, but only one net in its conventional position. Players must pass to coach before they can score. Coach exchanges puck with whichever team passes to him. 30-45-second shifts.



13. **4-2 turnover**—Same set-up as 3-3; team of four has puck and must make quick passes, holding on to the puck for no more than 2 seconds. If 2 get possession, 2 of 4 go out and 2 new players join 2 previous defenders on offense. Teaches importance of knowing where teammates are before puck comes, supporting puck at right angles, and keeping possession by making easy plays.



14. **2-2 Larry Robinson**—Set-up: players in two teams along the blue line, coach with pucks between the two teams; goalies in the nets facing each other, back of net on edge of circle; each team has 2 D in place, one at top and one at bottom of circle by the goal their team is defending. Start: coach dumps puck in, both teams send two players after it. Two attackers may work together to score or may use their two D as points. If D players receive puck, they may use one D-to-D pass or shoot, but may not pass to their attackers. D players may not actively defend or move from their spots at the top and bottom of circle. On whistle, the 2 D become new attackers, 2 players from line become new D, and 2 previous attackers rejoin line. 30-45 second shifts. Variations: on each goal, coach dumps in new puck immediately, or if “make it-take it,” passes immediately to scoring team—high intensity, short duration; 2-2 or 3-3; must pass first or don’t have to. Other conditions can be added, depending on what team needs to work on—must pass between sets of tires, must control puck certain amount of time before shot, must make certain number of passes, must pass off the boards, etc.



15. **2-2 Brett Hull**—*Set-up:* players in two teams along the blue line, coach with pucks between the two teams; goalies in the nets facing away from each other, back of net on edge of circle; each team has 3 stationary Forwards in place, facing the net that their team is attacking.
Start: coach dumps puck in, both teams send two players after it. Two attackers may work together to score or may pass to their 3 F. An F who receives the puck must shoot immediately, and a shot on goal allows that shooter to jump into the play. On whistle, all attackers and Fs return to line and 3 new stationary F and 2 new attackers start from each team. 30-45 second shifts.

