

PUCK PROTECT TO MAKE A PLAY

Tuesday, October 14th, 2025

Please Note: The Practice of the Week is usually designed to be utilized across multiple age levels. With that being said, we highly encourage you to adjust the drills based on your team's age and skill levels. IHS should always be used as a starting point and you can add/remove layers to fit your team.

Also Note: You do not need goalies or nets for all of these drills. Adjust based on your team structure.

Practice Theme: Puck protection is a skill that can be developed at every level of the game. While reinforcing the fundamentals, body positioning, balance, and awareness, coaches should challenge players to make a play after protecting the puck. Don't let protection become the end of the play; make it the setup for the next one.

Proper Body Positioning and Puck Protection

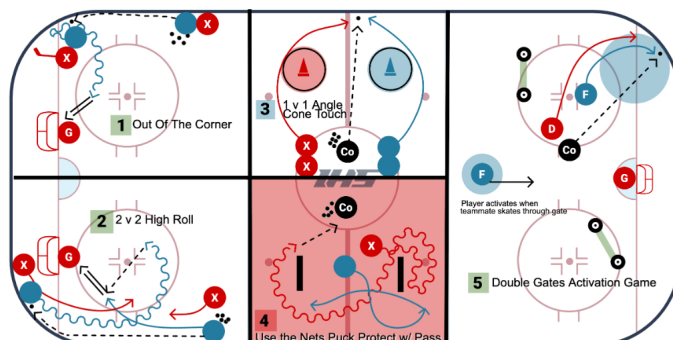
- Protect the puck: Use your body to shield the puck from defenders and maintain control.
- Strong stance: Stay low with knees bent and a wide base to maintain balance and absorb contact.
- Awareness of pressure: Recognize where the defender is applying pressure and position yourself accordingly.

Keep Your Feet Moving and Explode to Space

- Stay active: Keep your feet moving during battles to stay dynamic and harder to contain.
- Quick burst: Use powerful strides to accelerate away from the wall and create space.
- Escape with purpose: Focus on taking your first steps into open space or toward a play-making area.

Be Ready to Make a Play

- Read your options: Scan the ice as you leave the wall to identify open teammates or lanes.
- Make a decision: Quickly transition from puck protection to executing a play, whether it's a pass, shot, or skating into open ice.
- Stay in control: Use your head and hands to protect the puck while maintaining the ability to execute under pressure.



3 v 3 Keep Possession

Details:

Objectives: in the 3 v 3 Keep Possession game each team is working to keep possession by passing the puck, protecting the puck, and supporting the puck. The defending team is working to create a turnover and then keep possession of the puck.

Description:

- Three versus three in zone.
- Coach plays the puck in the zone. Player with puck possession attempts to move and pass to their teammates to keep possession against opponents.
- The defending team is working to create a turnover.
- Keep score! 1 point for a successful pass.

Points of emphasis:

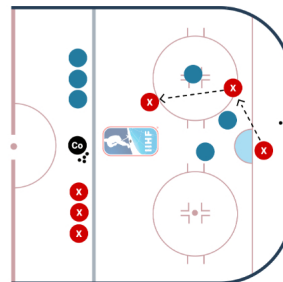
- Win space and become a passing option by skating.
- Provide support in tight situations for puck carrier.
- Readiness to transition and regain puck possession after turnover.

Variations:

- Can play 2 v 2, 3 v 3, or 4 v 4.
- Can create a variation where a three players on offense must touch the puck and pass it back to the coach to get a point, as shown in the [3 v 3 Pass to Coach](#).

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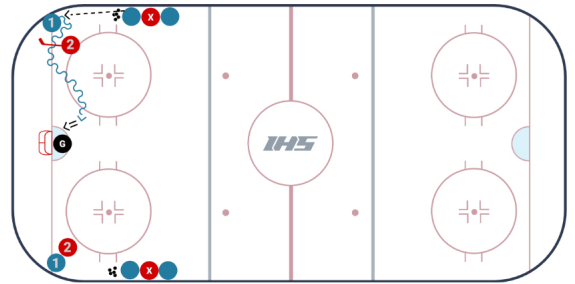
Station Number: Both Ends Of Ice



Out Of The Corner

Details:

The Out of the Corner drill from [TJ Manastersky](#), the Head Coach of [Brock University](#), helps players practice collecting a puck along the boards, protecting it, and cutting the defenders hands while they attack the net.



Setup

- Setup two lines along the boards as shown in the diagram with two players in each corner.
- On the whistle, one player sends a puck into the corner to begin the drill.
- #1 in blue picks up short rim, gets off the wall, initiates contact with defender (#2), cuts back and attacks net, cut hands on defender on way to to net.
- Player 1 goes to end of the line, player 2 becomes the new player along the boards, and a new player from line becomes the new defender. Alternate corners.
- Progression: Players can start from different areas of the ice, like the front of the net as explained in the whiteboard video and showed in the drill demonstration.

Coaching Points

- Offensive player should initiate contact with the defender and work to get off of the boards and cut their hands on the way to the net.
- Defending player should use token pressure to allow the forward to practice cutting hands. Coaches can progress to allow the defender to fully play. In this case make sure to keep your stick on the ice at all times and work to angle and deter the player from getting to the net.

Variations

- Coaches can line up players in different areas of the zone to practice collecting the puck from different areas.
- After players get used to the token pressure from the defender, coaches can progress this drill to be a 1 v 1 battle where the defender is working to take the puck away and skate to the stop of the circles while the forward is trying to score.

Station Number: Station #1

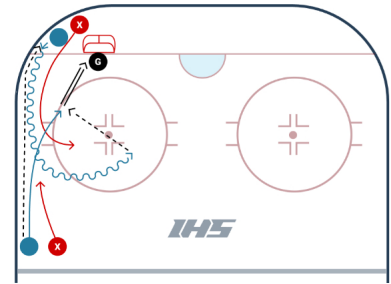
2 v 2 High Roll

Details:

Overview

The 2v2 High Roll drill works on puck retrieval, support, and separation from defenders through high rolls in the offensive zone. It combines game-like board play with pressure, forcing players to make quick decisions and use movement to create space.

Please Note: we did not capture a great rep with a high roll in the zone, but we still wanted to share it because this setup should provide for multiple high roll options. Encourage the player with the puck to climb the boards and either switch or keep the puck to confuse the defenders before high rolling to the tops of the circle.



Setup

- One offensive player and one defensive player line up at the blue line with a puck.
- A second offensive player and defensive player start down low near the goal line.
- On the whistle, the offensive player at the blue line rims the puck into the zone toward the teammate down low.
- The low offensive player retrieves the puck while facing **light pressure** from the defender.
- From there, the two offensive players work together against two defenders, prioritizing **high rolls** to open space and create offense.
- Either the puck carrier or the supporting forward can execute the high roll to separate from coverage and become a threat.

Coaching Points

- Clean Puck Retrieval: Low forward should angle their body, protect the puck, and get off the wall quickly.
- Puck Support: The second forward must read the play, stay close enough to help, and move into passing lanes.
- High Roll Execution: Both forwards should look to roll high into open ice, using movement to create separation and force defenders to adjust.

Why It Works

This drill develops habits that directly translate to offensive-zone play: working with a partner to support the puck, managing pressure on the wall, and using high rolls to create time and space. It's a great way to build awareness and connection between teammates while reinforcing smart movement against coverage.

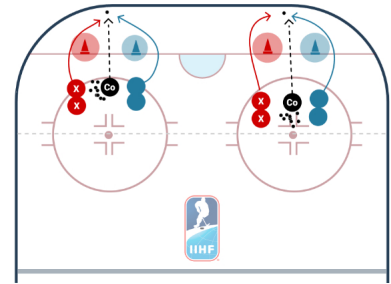
Station Number: Station #2

1 v 1 Angling Cone Touch Game

Details:

Objective: angling, defending on puck carrier

Description: The coach dumps a puck on the side of one of the two players. The players must react and skate around their cone. The player closest to the puck picks up the puck and tries to skate it to the opponent's cone. The other player must angle their opponent to the outside (towards the boards) and try and win possession of the puck. Game continues until a player touches their opponent's cone with the puck.



Points of emphasis:

- Take a good angle on the puck and/or the puck carrier
- Use controlled skating to time your route
- Work on body positioning to shield and/or steal the puck

Station Number: Station #3

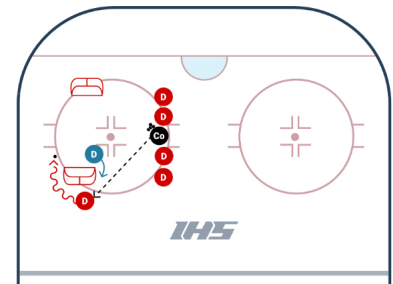
Use the Nets Puck Protection

Details:

The Use the Nets 1 on 1 Puck Protection drill from [Phillip Barski](#) focuses on teaching defensemen how to use the back of the net as a shield to evade forecheckers, improve puck protection, and develop deception in tight spaces.

Setup

- Use two nets placed approximately eight feet apart.
- One coach with pucks is positioned nearby to start each rep.
- One defenseman begins behind the net with the puck.
- One forechecker starts at one of the posts.



Execution

- The coach passes a puck to the defenseman behind the net to begin the drill.
- The forechecker pressures the defenseman, either forcing him to one side or chasing behind the net.
- The defenseman works to manipulate the puck and use the net as a shield to evade pressure.
- He can escape to either post, using deception via head fakes, shoulder movement, or stick positioning.
- The coach signals readiness for a breakout pass by putting his stick on the ice after having it raised.
- Once the pass is made, the rep ends and the next group steps in.

Coaching Points

- Encourage players to use of the net for protection.
- Use deception to escape from forecheckers in tight situations.

Variations

- Can set the nets up in different areas of the ice.

Supplemental Materials

- The second video shown is from Phillip's presentation on [A Defenceman's Blueprint To Breaking Pucks Out](#) at the Brock University High Performance Hockey Seminar

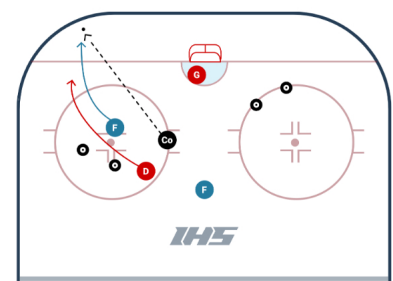
Station Number: Station #4

Double Gates Activation Game

Details:

The Double Gates Activation Game from [Coach Alyssa Gagliardi](#) is a competitive small area game that starts out as a 1 on 1 and becomes a 2 on 1 after a player skates through one of the gates. *This can also be modified to be a 2 on 2 that becomes a 3 on 2.*

Setup



- Place a gate (gates can be made by tires, cones, etc) on each side of the net. This will create two gates and two options for the offensive player to skate through.
- Place one forward and one defender in one of the corners or circles.
- Place an additional player at the high slot or point.
- To start:** a coach chips a puck in the corner to begin a 1 on 1 battle.
 - The forward is trying to first skate through a gate. Once the forward skates through the gate, they are able to pass it to the open player at the point to begin a 2 on 1. The offensive team is trying to score a goal.
 - The defender is trying to strip the puck during the 1 on 1 and/or the 2 on 1 and skate out of the zone.
- The coach can stop the play when there is a goal, the defender skates the puck out of the zone, the goalie freezes the puck or enough time has passed (15 - 30 seconds).

Coaching Points

- Offensive player:
 - Look over your shoulder to see where the pressure is coming from.
 - Do not expose the puck until you are ready to make a play. Use the net and the boards to protect the puck!
 - Keep head up to be aware of where the gates are and the extra player is.
- Defending player:
 - Work on taking a good angle.
 - Keep your stick on the ice to go after the puck and to block passing lanes.

Game Variations

- Can allow the forward to immediately try to score a goal, or you can require them to first go through the gate before they can score. Either way, if they go through the gate the other forward is activated.
- Can set up gates in different areas of the ice.
- Can add gates at the blueline that the defense needs to skate through instead of skating over the blueline.
- Can start the game in different areas of the zone.
- Can setup the game in smaller areas of the ice (example - 1/4 ice instead of 1/2 ice.)
- Can be modified to be a 2 on 2 that becomes a 3 on 2 (diagram displayed below)

Station Number: Station #5

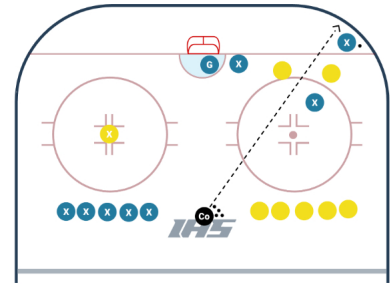
3 v 2 Puck Protection Game

Details:

The 3 v 2 Puck Protection Game shared by [Daniel Paille](#) helps players practice down low offensive zone concepts.

Setup

- Teams line up above top of the circle with O on one side and X on the other side.
- O will start on offense with 3 players vs 2 X defensive players. O's try to score staying on one half of the ice. If the defensive X players get the puck, they try to rim to their X teammate on weak side. The X player player can not release until puck reaches the weakside.
- When the defensive X's get it over to their weakside X player, the O's will change and new line of 2 O players play defense while another O waits weak side.
- The 2 X's join player on weak side for offense.
- The play continues if the offensive team scores, or the offensive team gets a shot on net.
- Offense is out if they miss the net on their shot or the defense rims the puck to their weakside player.



Coaching Points

- Offense:
 - The high forward should jump in for support to outnumber the 2 defenders.
 - The forwards should support each other with close triangle support.
 - When offense gets the puck they should attack the net quickly.
- Defense:
 - Keep sticks on ice to block passing lanes and angle forward to the outside, away from the front of the net.

Station Number: Both Ends Of Ice