



A Parent's Guide to Youth Field Hockey



SAFETY & EQUIPMENT

The first thing you'll want to purchase for your child is a mouth guard. This will protect her from any accidental mouth injuries (and they are also required). Other than the mouth guard, the only other protective gear worn is shin guards and cleats. Your daughter may need to be measured for a stick.

SIMILARITIES TO OTHER SPORTS

A way to gain a quick understanding of field hockey is to compare it to soccer and ice hockey.

Soccer uses similar positions. The object of the game is to score more goals than the other team, and the games are usually low-scoring, unlike lacrosse or basketball. The same mechanics of passing and shooting used in soccer also apply to field hockey. The main differences between the two sports are that field hockey is played with a stick and the use of the feet is not allowed!

Field hockey is also often compared to ice hockey. The two sports are similar, but possess some important differences. Both are played with a stick and an object (ball or puck). They also use similar passing and shooting techniques. The difference, though, is quite large. Ice hockey is a contact sport played on ice, and with fewer players (six). Field hockey, on the other hand, is a non-contact sport, played on the field with five or more players.

LEARN THE LINGO

Field hockey can be quite confusing, especially with the game constantly being stopped for fouls being called and whistles being blown — **which happens a lot in youth hockey**. There are really only two rules you'll need to know to have a general understanding of the game:

- **FREE HITS:** The game will be stopped a lot in hockey, especially at the youth level, for various fouls committed on the field. The main foul that will be called is the foot foul (when the ball hits a player's foot). In this case, a free hit is awarded to the other team, taken from where the foul occurred.
- **SCORING:** The ball has to be touched within the shooting circle to count as a goal. Parents are often surprised when the goalie steps out of the way and lets the ball hit the backboard. But don't worry; she didn't just give up on the ball. The ball has to be touched within the shooting circle for it to count as a goal.

TEAMS

1st & 2nd will play 5 v 5 without a goalie (2 forwards, 1 mid-field & 2 backs)

3rd & 4th will play 7 v 7 without a goalie (2 forwards, 3 mid-field, 2 backs)

5th & 6th will play 7 v 7 with a goalie (2 forwards, 3 mid-field, 1 back, 1 goalie)

POSITIONS

Positions in field hockey are not absolute. Generally, though, teams arrange players into defense, midfield, and attack. Goal Keepers are only used at the 5th- 6th grade level.

STICK BASICS & HANDLING

The head of a hockey stick is hooked. The right-hand side of the stick is rounded, while the left-hand side is flat. The ball can be played on the flat, left-hand side of the stick, or on its edge; it cannot be played on the rounded side. This is natural for right-handed players and unnatural for left-handed players. Unfortunately for lefties, left-handed sticks are not allowed to be used in games.

To make a legal hit to the right without using the rounding side of the stick, a player must turn the stick over the ball and use the flat side. Taking a hit by reversing the stick head — turning the handle approximate 180 degrees over the ball — and striking the ball with a left-to-right swing with the flat side of the stick is called a “reverse hit.”

Keeping the ball under close control is called dribbling, or stick handling. Dribbling is used when running with possession of the ball. It helps a player maneuver past opposing players for a chance to shoot on goal. Other essential skills for playing field hockey are the ability to control, pass, push, stop, and shoot the ball with your stick.

FOOT FOUL

Field players are not allowed to use their feet, or any other body part, to control the ball. If the ball hits a player’s foot, the umpire will either award the other team a free hit or let the game continue if the other team gains an advantage. Only the goalkeeper is allowed to use her hands, feet, and body to stop or strike the ball.

AIR BALL

The ball is allowed to be lifted in the air as long as the referee does not consider the play to be “dangerous.” The referee will make that call if the ball could potentially hit or injure another player. The general rule is that the ball should not be lifted above the knee within five meters of another player. The ball cannot be hit into the air unless it is a direct shot on goal.

FIELD GOAL

A goal can only be scored if the shot is taken within the “shooting circle,” a semi-circular area in front of the opponent’s goal. The shooting circle is also known as the “dee” or “D” for the defensive team. The ball must be touched by a player on either team inside the circle for it to count as a goal.

FREE HITS

Free hits are awarded throughout the main part of the field for general offenses by either team. The most common fouls that lead to free hits are:

- Obstructing an opponent from playing the ball

- Interfering with the stick or body when hackling
- Kicking the ball
- Playing the ball dangerously (including lifting the ball)
- **Self-start on free hits is only used at the 3rd – 4th & 5th – 6th grade level.**

In a free hit, the ball is given to the fouled team where the offense took place. The ball is placed on the ground and a player will re-start the action by passing it to a teammate, hitting the ball forward or backward, or through a self-pass (either by dribbling the ball or hitting it into space). **The self-start must be two “distinct” touches.** All opposing players must stand at least five yards from this player until the ball is put into play.

If the ball is within the 25-yard area of a goal, the ball cannot be directly hit into the circle. The ball must travel five yards by dribbling or passing before it can be hit into the circle and shot at goal.

OBSTRUCTION

Obstruction is a huge part of field hockey and is a direct contribution to the high frequency of whistle blows during games. In the most general terms, obstruction is called when the ball is shielded from an opposing player who is trying to get the ball. Players often use their own bodies or sticks to block the ball, but third party obstruction is also called. Third party obstruction is called when a player runs between her teammate (who has possession of the ball) and an opponent trying to get the ball, essentially block the opponent’s path.

MATCH TIME

Games are 36 minutes in length. 18 minute halves. Games will begin with a pass back and all **games that end in a tie will remain in a tie.** Team records will not be recorded, there are no playoffs. A coin toss will determine possession at beginning of game and second half possession will be awarded to the team who lost the coin toss.

1st & 2nd grade games will be 12 minute halves.

UMPIRES

In PARPC Weed Whackers Field Hockey league, there is one umpire (or “referee”) in each game.

UMPIRE CALLS

The whistle is the umpire’s tool to enforce the rules of the game. The umpire blows the whistle to:

- Start the first and second half of the game
- Call a foul
- Indicate a goal

- Re-start a match after it's been stopped
- Stop a match to substitute players into the game
- Stop the match for an injury
- The umpire uses the whistle to keep the game moving smoothly.

Read more at: <http://fieldhockey.isport.com/fieldhockey-guides/field-hockey-rules-regulations>