

How to Play Indoor Hockey – A Beginner's Guide

Introduction

Indoor Hockey is a version of Outdoor or Field Hockey. It developed in Europe in the 1950s mainly to allow keen hockey players to continue enjoying their sport during periods of bad winter weather. But as it is an exciting and enjoyable version of the game it is now played in many locations around the world. It can actually be played on any hard, smooth and flat surface but is usually played in a sports hall. The pitch is therefore smaller than an outdoor field. It is only 44 metres by 22 metres at most. Something else which distinguishes an indoor pitch from an outdoor one is that indoors there are 10cm boards down the longer pitch side-lines. This keeps the ball in play more and so helps to create a fast, flowing and exciting game.

In indoor hockey the ball may only be pushed and not hit or flicked. Except for a shot at goal, it may only be played along the ground. An essential skill necessary for playing hockey is the ability to control, pass, push, stop and shoot the ball with your hockey stick. Players skilfully push, pass and dribble the ball. But, as in field/outdoor hockey, the fundamental aim of the game is score by getting the ball into the opponents' goal. To do that, they have to get the ball past the other team's goalkeeper, who protects the goal, and logically, tries to keep the ball out!

Player positions

Each player has 6 players, one is a goalkeeper and the other 5 players are referred to as 'field players'. They can play as attackers, midfielders and defenders.

Equipment

- Indoor field hockey sticks feature a **thinner shaft and toe** for a more lightweight stick that's easier to manoeuvre, allowing players to move, dodge, and shoot more quickly.
- The ball used is smaller and lighter than the ball used for outdoor play, it is smooth with no dimples so that it moves easily on an indoor pitch.
- Indoor left hand glove
- Mouthguard and shinguards
- Goalkeeper equipment includes sliders to cover leg guards, making sliding easy

No Feet!

It may seem like common sense, but it is worth mentioning that in indoor hockey just as in outdoor hockey, field players are not allowed to use their feet (or any other parts of their bodies for that matter) to control the ball. Only the goalkeeper is allowed to use hands, feet, etc. to stop or propel the ball when defending in his or her own circle.

Field goals

May only be taken from the 'shooting circle', a roughly semi-circular area in front of the opponents' goal. If a ball is played from outside the 'shooting circle' and it goes directly into the goal or is only touched by a defender on the way, it does not count as a score.

Penalty Corners

If a defending team breaks certain rules, the other team may be awarded a 'penalty corner.' It is awarded when a team breaks a rule while defending in their 'shooting circle'. It can also be awarded when a defender is guilty of a particularly bad foul in the defending half of the pitch.

To take a penalty corner, play is stopped to allow the teams to take their positions in attack and defence. One attacker stands with the ball on a designated spot on the back-line. This player will 'push out' the ball to other attackers, waiting to take a shot at goal. The attackers position themselves at the top of the shooting circle to receive the ball. All members of the defending team (including the goalkeeper) position themselves behind the back-line to defend against the penalty corner. Only the goalkeeper is allowed to position her/himself inside the goal. All other defenders must be outside the goal on the side opposite from where the ball is being put into play. The ball is 'pushed out' to an attacker waiting to receive it. Before a shot on goal can be taken, the ball must first travel outside the circle. The receiver then usually pushes it back into the circle for a shot either by her/himself or another attacker. Once the attacker on the back-line begins to push the ball out, the defenders on the back line may move into the circle, and do their best to stop the other team from scoring.

Penalty Strokes

A penalty stroke is a shot taken on goal by a chosen player and defended only by the goalkeeper. (All other players must stand in the other half of the pitch.) A penalty stroke may be awarded for a few reasons, the most common being an offence by a defender in the circle to prevent the probable scoring of a goal. The shot is taken from a spot 7 metres directly in front of the goal.