

# FIELD HOCKEY BASICS



## BY THE NUMBERS

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 11                    | <b>Players per side</b><br>(including goalkeeper)     |
| 4                     | <b>Quarters</b><br>(two 15-minute quarters each half) |
| 5 <sup>or</sup><br>10 | <b>Minute halftime</b>                                |

## STOPPING THE BALL (defensive)

**Block Tackle** - Player lowers the stick close to the ground and uses the length of the stick to block a ball's advance. Using the entire stick widens the area available to intercept or steal the ball and slows the offensive player's motion.



**Jab Tackle** - Player jabs the stick toward the ball with left hand extended (flat side up), then quickly returns both hands and regains a balanced position. This swift motion can disrupt the advance of the play and possibly cause a loss of possession.

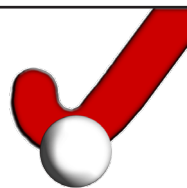


**Reverse Tackle** - Used when an offensive player is on a defender's weak (left) side, defensive player extends left arm out with stick inverted close to the ground to slow the play, block the ball's path and try to cause a loss of possession.



For more information and rules, visit [usafielddhockey.com](http://usafielddhockey.com).

## STICK BASICS



There is no such thing as a left-handed stick.

Only push or hit with the flat side or edge of the stick.

Only goalies can use their body to stop and move the ball.

Good stick skills and passing are key to success.

## MOVING THE BALL (offensive)

**Push** - This skill is executed with player's hands apart. The head of the stick stays in contact with the ball as it is pushed and there is no backswing. This allows for good control, quick movement and is used for accurate passing or shooting.



**Hit** - A powerful motion where the stick is brought down swiftly from a back swing and strikes the ball with a long follow through. The hit is fast and favored for sending the ball long distances or for making a hard shot on goal.



**Lift, Flick, Aerial** - A skill in which the ball stays in contact with the head of the stick as it is lifted into the air. There is no back swing. Lifts are used primarily to raise the ball over long distances or as shots on goal.



**Forehand Sweep** - Commonly used on turf or a smooth playing surface, player lowers stick parallel to ground and hits the ball with a circular motion. A sweep allows for more power than a push, making it effective for quick yet long hard passes and shots.



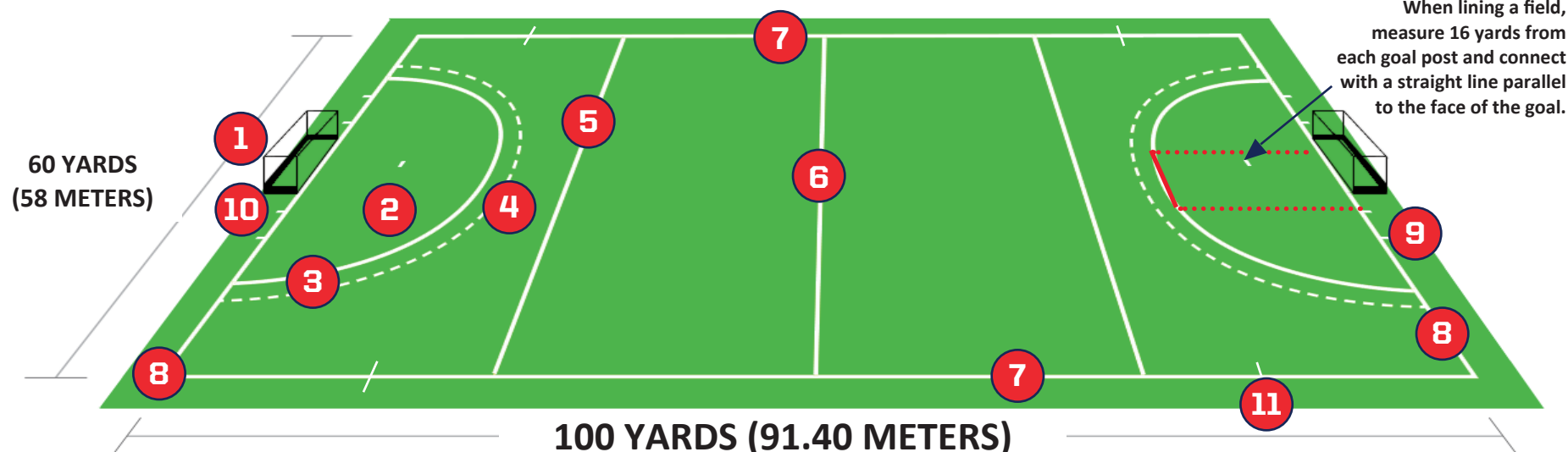
**Reverse Sweep** - Player uses the same motion as the forehand sweep with the ball starting on players left side. Player uses a different grip and must use the side of the stick with the flat side up. This is an effective hitting action used for passing and shooting.



**Drag Flick** - This specialty skill is used by advanced players to shoot along the ground or into the air on a penalty corner. It can be as powerful as a hit yet requires no back swing, making it especially deceptive. It's an important skill to develop for high level competition.



# THE FIELD



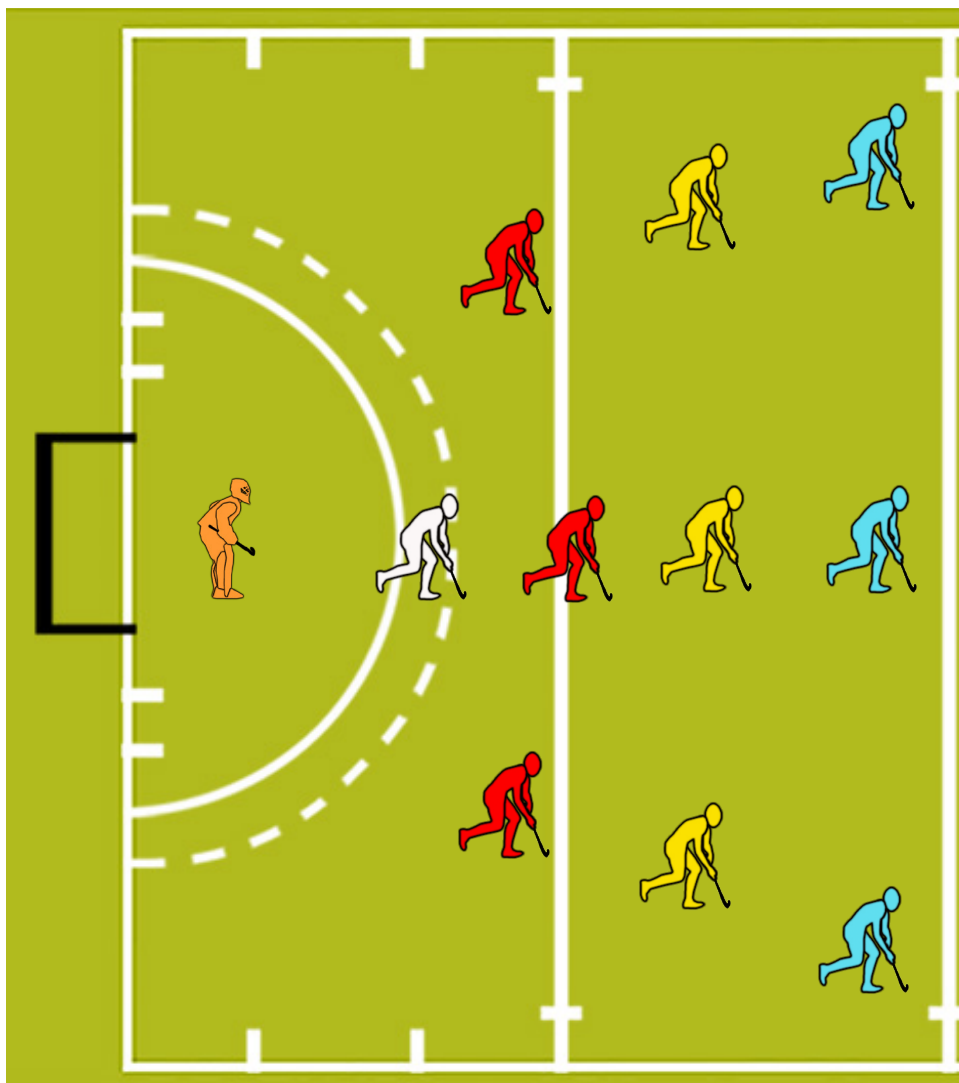
Field hockey is played on a rectangular field, 100 x 60 yards, called a **pitch** or **field**. Although traditionally played on grass or turf, the game has many variations and can be enjoyed on any flat surface, even a beach. Internationally, field hockey is played on a water-based turf field that is watered regularly to speed up the game and prevent the ball from bouncing.

- 1 Goals** - Goals are 7 feet high, 12 feet wide and 4 feet deep. In addition to nets, goals have an 18 inch board lining the bottom inside sides and back. The goal sits just behind the end line, not on it.
- 2 Stroke mark** - Dash centered in front of each goal, 7 yards from the goal line marking the position where a penalty stroke is taken.
- 3 Scoring circle or "D"** - A solid, "near" semi-circle surrounding the goal 16 yards from the goal. **Note the top of the circle is flat across the face of the goal.** Only balls hit or deflected into the goal within this circle are a score. Defensive fouls within the scoring circle result in a penalty corner.
- 4 5-yard mark** - A dash-lined semi-circle 5 yards outside the scoring circle. Penalty corners end when the ball crosses the 5-yard mark.
- 5 25-yard line** - Intentional or repeated fouls from this line to the near end line result in a penalty corner.
- 6 Center line** - Solid line that divides field in half. The ball is taken from the middle of this line at the beginning of each half and after a goal.
- 7 Sideline** - Boundaries along the length of the field marking the side of the field of play. If a ball is hit out, the opposing team brings it in with a pass or self-start. Players feet can be outside of sideline as long as the ball is inside or on the line.
- 8 End line** - Boundaries along the width of the field. Offensive hits that cross this line result in defense getting the ball at 16 yards. Defensive hits that cross this line result in either a long corner or penalty corner, if deemed intentional.
- 9 Corner mark** - Short dashes 11 yards (10 meters) from the edge of each goal cage that mark the place from which penalty corners may be inserted.
- 10 Defender mark** - Short dash 5.5 yards (5 meters) from the edge of each goal marking the closest position which a defender may stand to the inserter on a penalty corner.
- 11 16-yard line** - These 12 inch marks identify the 16-yard line where 16-yard free hits are taken.

# PLAYER POSITIONING



## SAMPLE FORMATION (3-3-3-1)



## FORMATIONS

Although player positions have defined primary responsibilities, field hockey is a fluid game and players have the flexibility to traverse the field. Defenders can be viable scoring threats, midfielders help defend and score goals and forwards fall back to aid the defense. Teamwork and communication are critical and more important than positions or formations.

A coach often sets formations based on the skill and strength of the players and the opposing team. Any formation is acceptable, and all positions are important. A coach may opt to play four forwards (potentially a 4-3-3 formation with four forwards, three midfielders and three defenders), a 3-4-3 with three forwards, four midfielders, three backs, or even a 3-3-3-1 with a defensive “sweeper.”

## POSITIONS



### Forwards (Attackers or Strikers)

Offensive position whose primary responsibility is to advance play toward the goal and convert the opportunities created with fellow players into goals.



### Midfielders (Middies)

Both an offensive and defensive position who acts as an initial line of defense as well as advances the ball to the forwards and opposing side of the field.



### Defenders (Backs)

Defensive position whose primary responsibility is to protect the goalkeeper, prevent opposing forwards from getting into scoring position and advance the ball to the midfielders and forwards.



### Sweeper (Cover or Back)

Some formations include one player who traditionally is positioned either behind or in front of the defensive line and whose primary goal is defense.



### Goalkeeper (Goalie)

Defensive position whose primary responsibility is to prevent opponents from scoring and to coordinate defenders in the defense of the goal.

# THE EQUIPMENT

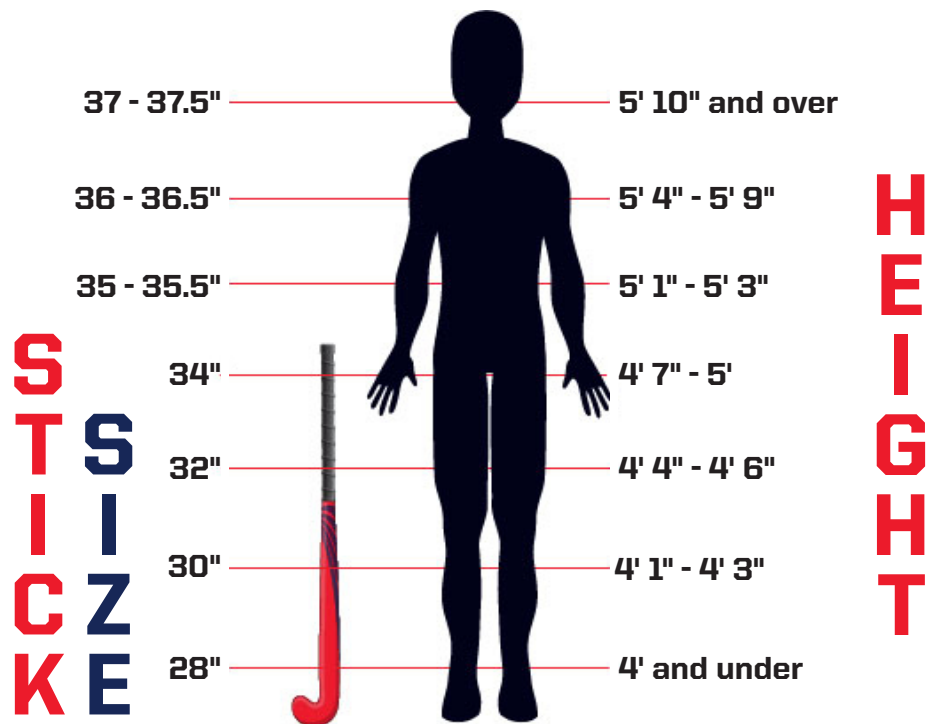


## STICKS

Field hockey sticks are rounded on one side and flat on the other. They come in a wide range of lengths to fit any size or age player. It's important for a player to use a stick that is comfortable in length. A stick that is too long will be difficult to maneuver. A stick that is too short may also be awkward and limit power. There is no such thing as a left-hand stick. Beginner sticks are usually constructed of wood and are lightweight, less rigid and more forgiving, making it easier for a beginner to stop and control the ball. As players develop, they will understand what kind of stick works best for them and move on to a more powerful, composite stick. Stick length, style and weight is based on individual preference. This is just a general guide to appropriate stick length.

### STICK SIZING AND SELECTION

Stick length, style and weight is based on individual preference, but this is a general guide for beginners, based on player height.



Many players like to measure appropriate stick length from the ground to their hip bone. Before investing in a stick, consult with your coach, field hockey equipment manufacturer or retailer. Most adults of any height prefer sticks that are between 36-37.5".

### BALLS

Field hockey balls are made of plastic. They are usually white or orange, although they can be any color that contrasts with the playing surface. Some balls are smooth and some are dimpled to reduce aquaplaning on wet surfaces. Different balls may be used for development training and play.

### GLOVES

Optional, worn to protect hands, improve grip and stay warm.

### CORNER MASKS

Corner masks are required to be worn by defensive players while defending penalty corners. The masks are removed and thrown out of play when the penalty corner play is over.

### MOUTH GUARDS

Mouth guards are required to be worn to prevent dental injury.

### SHINGUARDS

Hard plastic shinguards are traditionally worn by all field players to protect against balls and sticks hitting the shins.



### EQUIPMENT STORE

To make the game affordable and accessible to all, USA Field Hockey sells beginner equipment, including plastic and wood sticks and the oversized GO Ball, accessories and more.

**SHOP NOW**

# GOALKEEPING EQUIPMENT



**CHEST PROTECTOR**

**HELMET**

**STICK**

Goalkeeper sticks can be slightly different from a field player's stick. The speciality curved blade provides extra stopping area for saves. A regular stick can also be used.

**MOUTH GUARD**

**THROAT PROTECTOR**

**BLOCKERS & GLOVE**

**JERSEY**

Goalkeepers must wear a different colored jersey for easy visual distinction.

**ARM GUARDS**

**KICKERS**

These are worn over shoes.

**PANTS & GIRDLE**

Girdle is worn under pants.

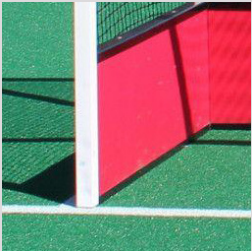
**LEG GUARDS**



**Goalkeeper equipment must fit well allowing the goalkeeper maximum mobility and protection.**



# THE OFFICIAL GOAL



An official field hockey goal is 2.1 meters (7 feet) high, 3.7 meters (12 feet) wide and 1.2 meters (4 feet) deep. 18-inch high boards line the inside of the goal on both sides and the back, and a tight net lines the remaining space of the goal.

Goals may be constructed of different materials but are commonly made of aluminum or wood. They tend to be heavy, sitting flat on the ground so they are safe and secure. As a result, they often have wheels so the goals can be moved by tipping and rolling.

When placing a goal onto a field, make sure the front edge of the goal sits outside the field, abutting the back of the goal line. The goal should not be on the goal line, as a ball needs to completely cross the goal line to be considered a goal.

## 18-INCH BOARDS

The sound of the ball hitting the boards when a goal is scored is unique to field hockey. But many ask, why do goals have boards?

The 18-inch boards on the inside bottom of the cage play an important role during penalty corners, and the rule is often confusing to beginners. If, during a penalty corner, the first shot at goal is a hit (as opposed to a push, flick or scoop), the ball must cross the goal line, or be on a path which would have resulted in it crossing the goal line, at a height of no more than 18 inches (the height of the backboard) before any deflection, for a goal to be scored.

The requirements of the rule apply even if the ball touches the stick or body of a defender before the first shot at goal.

If the first shot at goal is a hit and the ball is, or will be, too high when crossing the goal line, it must be penalized even if the ball is subsequently deflected off the stick or body of another player.

The ball may be higher than 18 inches during its flight before it crosses the goal line provided there is no danger and provided it would drop of its own accord below 18 inches before crossing the line.

For second and subsequent hits at the goal and for flicks, deflections and/or scoops, it is permitted to raise the ball to any height but this must not be dangerous.



**Outdoor Goal**

## INDOOR GOALS

Goals for indoor field hockey are smaller. They are 3 meters (9.8 feet) wide, 2 meters (6.6 feet) high and a minimum of 1-meter (3.3 feet) deep. Boards are not mandatory for indoor.