



“Nobody can skate as fast as a puck can be passed, so use that advantage as much as you can”

ALL ZONES – PASSING

Passing is an art that should be practiced from the youngest age as one of the fundamental hockey skills. An average skater and shooter can be an above average hockey player if he is a great passer.

Passing usually is developed hand-in-hand with puck handling, skating, and feel for the puck. If you can handle a puck on your stick with ease without looking at it all the time you can see the whole ice, and see your open team mate. The game becomes a lot easier. The same holds true for skating if you feel stable and comfortable on your skates. So drills to improve passing at more than just a basic level should be highly mobile, involve turns and crossovers and obstacles under some pressure to be similar to real hockey situations.

In the old days the passing art was learned mostly by playing shinny for hours with more than 10 players on the ice at once when it became impossible to carry the puck on your own and you learned this very quickly. Also, if you didn't pass enough you'd hear about it immediately from the other players, especially the older guys you were playing with.

Let's go back to the basic passes:

1. **The Forehand Wrist Pass** – similar positioning and motion to the forehand wrist shot (see Offensive Zone – Shooting) if you wanted to shoot low. Thus the release of your wrists after they have been cocked and your arms are through and low as opposed to through and up. The follow through is still the same right through pointing at the target ... the tape on your team mate's stick which should be on the ice giving you a target. This pass is used if there is a clear ice path to your team mate's stick and is the most effective when the puck is delivered crisply
2. **The Backhand Wrist Pass** - similar positioning and motion to the backhand wrist shot (see Offensive Zone – Shooting) if you wanted to shoot low. But it's difficult to get as much speed on a backhand pass as a forehand pass so be careful with backhand passes in your own end
3. **The Snap Pass** – again similar to the snap shot in positioning and motion (see Offensive Zone – Shooting). This is used for longer usually cross ice or to the crease passes to get the puck there faster
4. **The Half Slap Shot Pass** - again similar to the half slap shot in positioning and motion (see Offensive Zone – Shooting). This is also used for longer usually cross ice or to the crease passes to get the puck there faster



5. **The Dump Pass** – this is a short pass where you just need to get the puck over the opposition's stick so the puck is lifted just high enough off the ice to clear the opposition's stick. Because the puck is moving so slowly it settles down flat very quickly as it reaches our player's stick.

To make this work the puck needs to be a bit in front of you with the blade of your stick placed on about a 45 degree angle on the ice right next to the puck in the middle of your stick and the puck is gently lifted over the competition's stick. The feel is like throwing a ball underhand but firmly enough so the ball gets to its target. By drawing the puck to you a little bit first before you try to lift it makes it easier to do so and gives you a better feel.

This type of pass is very effective in the offensive zone cycling or on an odd man rush for us. Avoid using this type of pass in your own zone as it is easier to block or be deflected because it is moving so slowly

6. **The Saucer Pass** – This is a pass that goes over the opposition's stick without the puck tumbling end over end like in the dump pass above. In stead, the puck is made to spin clockwise or counterclockwise from the time it leaves your stick so that the puck lands flat immediately and so that it can be easily received and handled immediately or shot immediately.

To make this happen, the puck needs to be a bit in front of you and your stick slightly angled as it touches the puck. The puck starts at the heel of your stick and with a side-to-side wrist and wrist cocking and releasing motion the puck is made to roll down your stick to the tip of your blade picking up speed along the way so it is elevating slightly as it leaves your stick, spinning evenly. Again like a low wrist shot.

Try this on the backhand. With a curved stick it is easier to get the puck rotating starting it from the heel of the stick and going to the tip of the stick blade.

7. **The Indirect Pass** – This is a pass off the base boards or the boards or the glass to your team mate and requires lots of practice to understand both the angle the puck will come off the boards/glass and the speed of the puck as it deflects. Quite an art to make this type of pass consistently and very effective in getting passes to teammates without hitting the opposition's stick, skates or body
8. **Pass To Yourself** - This is a pass off the base boards or the boards or the glass to yourself to get around a defender who is about to check you. Or in open ice you can slide the puck gently through the defender's skates or between the defender's stick and skates and pick it up after you are past him. Some defencemen standing behind our net with a checker after him are able to pass the puck off the back of our net (either at the metal bottom touching the ice or off the tight mesh) to themselves and avoid the check and then pick the puck up again. Must be quite skilled to make this work.



The accuracy of any pass is one of the most important keys to moving the puck quickly and at full speed. Obviously if the pass is in your team mate's skates, he may well be able to kick or deflect it up to his stick but normally this will slow him down. Constant repetitive practice judging passing distance, puck speed, puck receiver speed and how much to lead the pass receiver will lead to improved passing accuracy.

The same is true when passes are made to team mates in scoring position. An accurate pass enables a quick shot before the goalie gets set or reduces the shooter's angle, but if the shooter has to first get the puck into shooting position after taking a pass his quick release advantage is lost. Remember in this situation the pass receiver should be properly turned to be in good shooting position before the pass is made as well as giving the passer a good on the ice stick target. Hard to pass to the tape when the pass receiver's stick is in the air!