



Under-9 (U9) Development Zone Seasonal Plan



Introduction

This document contains 20 different Under-9 (U9) Development Zone plans for Coaches to use as the foundation to their skill development plan for the U9 season. It provides a guideline for Coaches to help them plan the U9 Development Zone.

These Development Zone plans are designed to teach the core skills in a progressive approach throughout the season. This will allow players to develop their core skills from the beginning of the season and steadily progress to a higher level near the end of the season.

Development Zone Plan Breakdown

The 20 Development Zone plans are broken down into four plans for each of the five core hockey skills (Skating, Passing, Puck Control, Shooting and Checking). In each plan there are two drills, and one Small Area Game that can be utilized within the Development Zone.

Each plan is designed with a specific goal in mind relating to one of the five core skills. As a result, the provided drills have been laid out in an approach that begins with the basics of technique and moves into different progressions of the skill. The culmination is a small area competitive game that provides players an opportunity to work on the skill in a more game-like scenario.

Goalies can be incorporated into any drill that includes a shot or a situation that allows the goalie to work on a particular type of movement. If there are not enough Goalies modify the size of the net in some way that makes it harder for players to score. You can achieve this by turning the net around to face the boards, using an obstacle to block part of the net, use a mini net or have players hit the posts to score rather than shooting into an open net.

For the Development Zone during the First Period you should go over 2 drills with each group. Depending on the number of players you will have to adjust the time spent on each drill. If you have a small group you can implement more progressions and variations of the drill. The Development Zone during the Second Period will be spent doing Small Area Games that build on the skills taught during the drills in the First Period.

The time allocated to each drill and Small Area game per time slot is up to the Coach's discretion. It is the Coach's responsibility to manage the Development Zone and ensure the time being spent there is used towards developing skills.

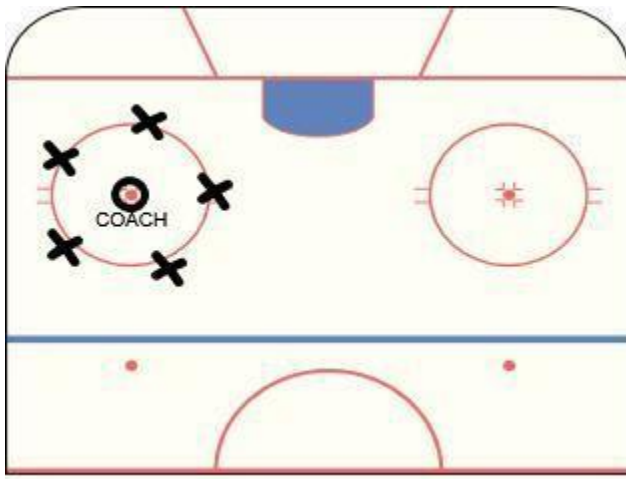
The following is an example of how you can design your development zone;

FIRST HALF	24 MIN	DRILL #
GROUP 1	8 MIN	DRILL 1 + DRILL 2
GROUP 2	8 MIN	DRILL 1 + DRILL 2
GROUP 3	8 MIN	DRILL 1 + DRILL 2
SECOND HALF	24 MIN	
GROUP 1	8 MIN	SMALL AREA GAME
GROUP 2	8 MIN	SMALL AREA GAME
GROUP 3	8 MIN	SMALL AREA GAME



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 1 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

SKATING 1–HOCKEY STANCE (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teaching the fundamentals of proper hockey stance

- Review hockey stance
- Explain proper stride and recover to middle after each stride
- Review glide

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Legs shoulder width apart
- Chest and head up
- Knees bent

ORGANIZATION

- Have players lined up around faceoff circle
- Review basic 3 point stance

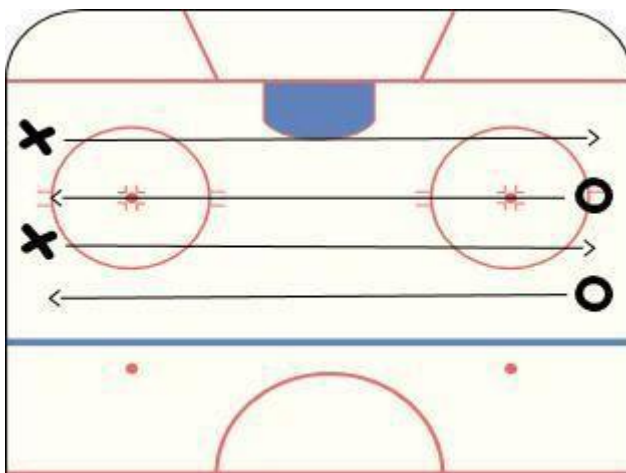
PROGRESSION

- single leg stance, alternating legs
- one knee down, get back up to basic stance
- both knees down, get back up to basic stance

VARIATIONS

- Add competition: See who can stand on one leg the longest

SKATING 1 – GLIDES (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach the importance of proper gliding for most efficient skating technique.

- Review hockey stance
- Explain proper stride and recover to middle after each stride
- Review glide

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Full leg extensions
- Stride push out to the side
- Stride recovers to the middle

ORGANIZATION

- Start with one-foot glides, stop at boards and switch feet
- Progress to two-foot glide, using only one foot to push, switch feet at boards

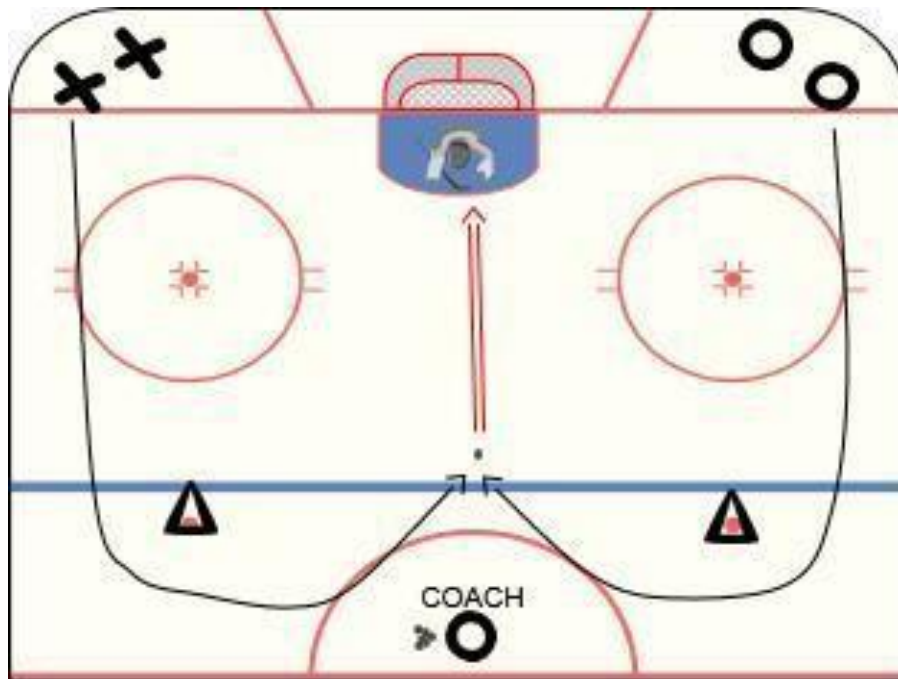
PROGRESSION

- Add Puck
- Add competition:
 - See who can travel the farthest gliding with only one push
 - Start with one-foot glides, alternating feet, then two foot glides



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 1 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

SKATING 1 – SMALL AREA GAMES – PUCK RACE



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

- Players should be using quick explosive strides to start
- Progress to long powerful strides with good glides

ORGANIZATION

- Players start in opposite corners
- Coach will be at center will pucks
- Coach says "go" and players with skate toward pylon
- Coach will place a puck in the middle
- Players will race toward puck and try to score

PROGRESSION:

- Add pylon on faceoff dot
- Players must skate toward pylon from the inside then proceed to second pylon the same way they did originally
- (Optional) Add a third pylon

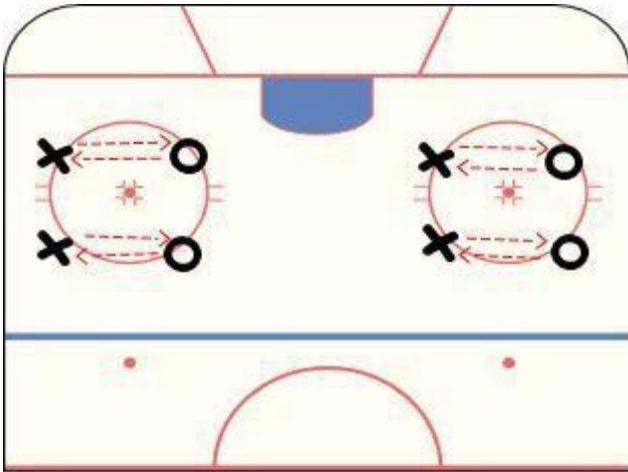
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENTZONE – GAME 2 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

PASSING 1 – STATIONARY PASSES (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach and explain proper passing technique. Also teach proper technique for receiving a pass.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will set up in pairs with one puck
- With their partner they will make passes to each other while standing stationary

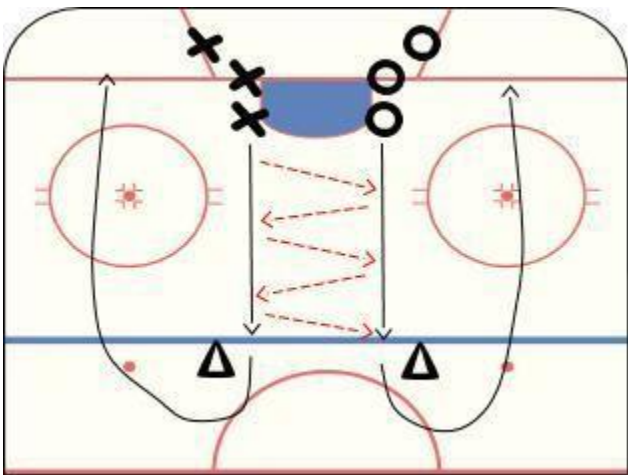
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Show target
- Follow through (point at target)
- Cushion pass on reception

PROGRESSION

- Start with forehand passes
- Then go to backhand passes
- Receive on forehand and make backhand pass
- Receive on backhand and make forehand pass
- Add movement

PASSING 1 – PASSING WHILE SKATING (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Completing passes with a partner while skating in a straight line.

ORGANIZATION

- when the coach says "go" players skate in a straight line with their partners
- as they skate up the ice they complete as many proper passes to each other as they can
- when they reach the pylon, they curl back and go to the start of the line

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- show target
- follow through (point at target)
- lead pass
- control puck on reception before you return pass

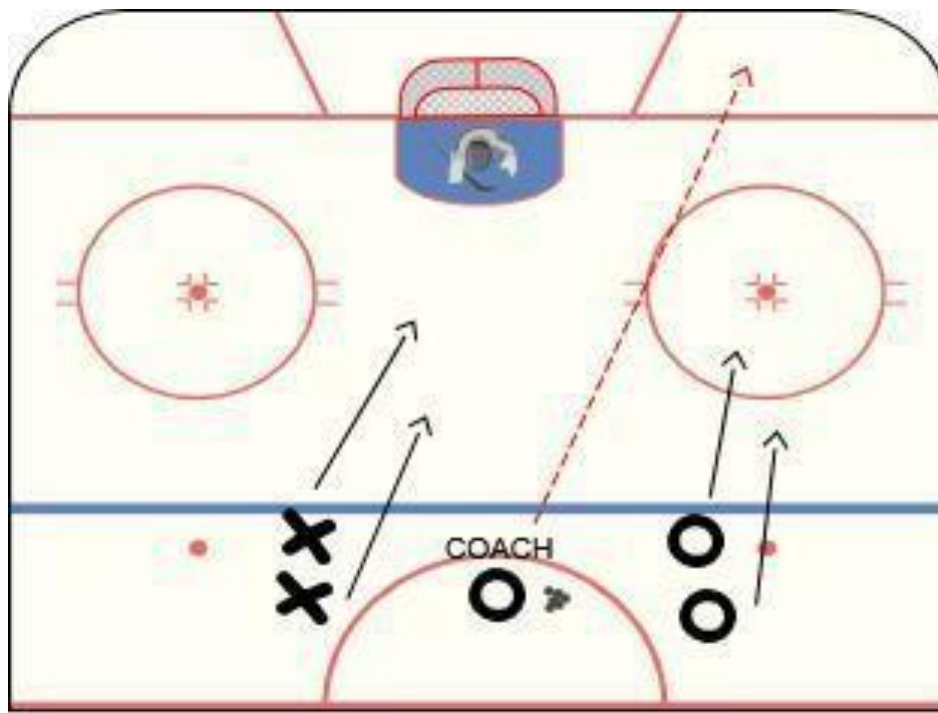
PROGRESSION

- One player skates forward and the other skates backward – then alternate direction



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 2 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

PASSING 1 – SMALL AREA GAMES – 2V2 PASS TO COACH



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will be put into teams of two
- The coach will dump in the puck and two teams will go in after the puck
- Teams must complete a pass to the Coach and receive a pass back from the Coach to gain possession
- Once a team has possession they are now on offence and can attempt to score on the net
- The other team must defend and try to take the puck away. If they do take the puck away they can try and complete a pass with the Coach and gain possession to go on the offensive.
- After a team has scored or a certain amount of time has passed, switch the teams

PROGRESSION

- Add a third player to one team (3 on 2)
- Add another player to the other team to even it up
- When players pass to the coach they must also clear the zone. Introducing offside rule.

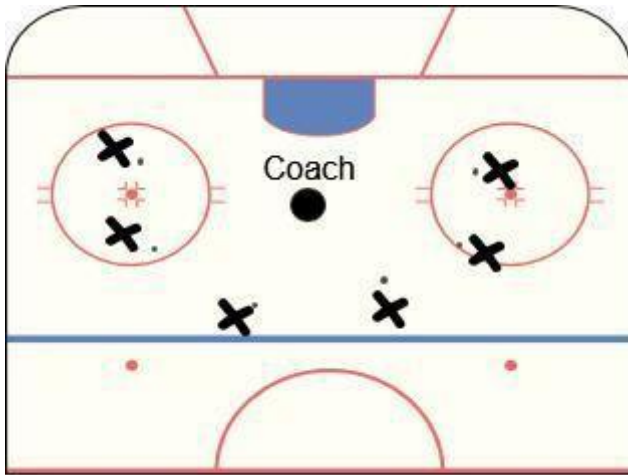
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 3 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

PUCK CONTROL 1 – STATIONARY STICK HANDLING (PART 1 OF 2)



- Demonstrate stick handling in front, forehand, backhand
- Explain why stick handling in each position is important

ORGANIZATION

- Players setup anywhere around the ice with a puck
- While stationary they will practice stick handling
- First they will stick handle in front, then forehand, then backhand
- Coaches should move around and make any corrections or adjustments to technique

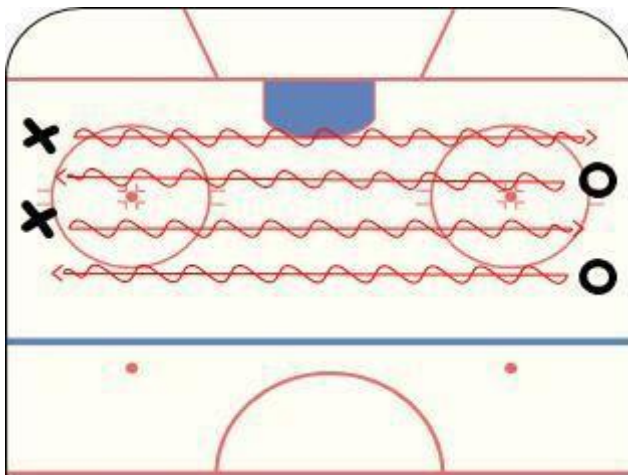
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- head up
- hands away from body
- Maintain proper hockey stance

PROGRESSION

- Add pylons for players to stick handle around
- On one foot while stick handling
- One knee down stick handling
- Down on both knees while stick handling

PUCK CONTROL 1 – STICKHANDLING WHILE SKATING (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Expand on stick handling skill, adding movement

ORGANIZATION

- Players will each have a puck and line up along the boards
- They will skate to the other side stick handling in front of their body, keeping head up
- Ensure they are maintaining proper hockey stance and doing proper strides

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Head up
- Hands away from body
- Keep your feet moving (shuffle skate)

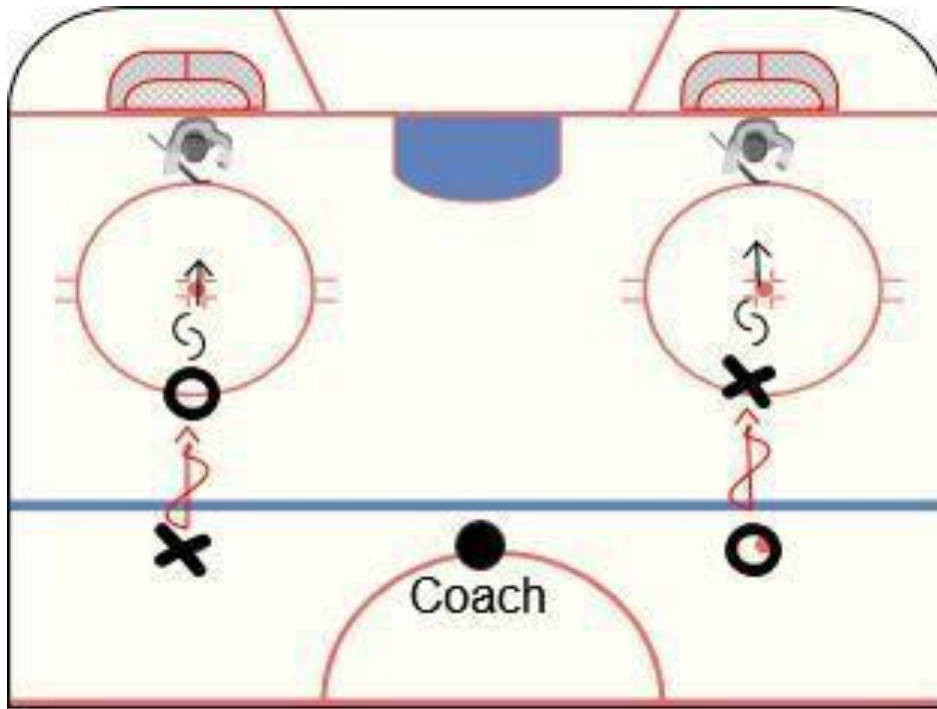
PROGRESSION

- Drop down to one knee while moving and get back up, repeat the entire way down
- Stick handle from side and behind
- Backwards skating



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 3 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

PUCK CONTROL 1 – SMALL AREA GAMES – 1 ON 1



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- One or two games going on at the same time
- Players will face each other in 1 on 1
- Objective of the game is to use stick handling skills to get around your opponent
- One player starts with puck and the other defends
- Defender can steal puck and go on offensive, must clear the zone first

PROGRESSION

- 2 on 2

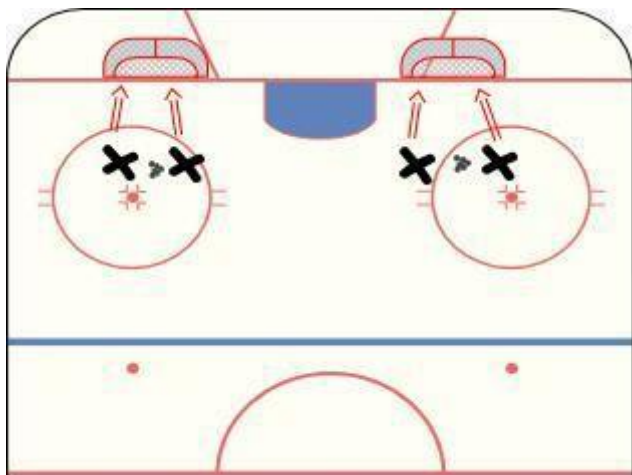
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 4 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

SHOOTING 1 – STATIONARY SHOOTING (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Break down the fundamental mechanics of shooting a puck.

- Coaches should explain and demonstrate the fundamentals of shooting
- Focus on loading, weight transfer and release
- Observe players and make corrections to technique

ORGANIZATION

- Players should each have a couple pucks
- Players line up in front of nets and take shots on goal while stationary

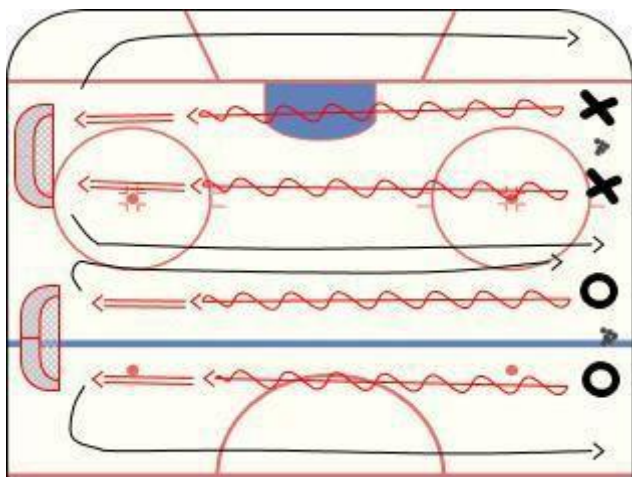
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Load the shot
- Weight transfer, use your whole body
- Follow through on release

PROGRESSION

- Backhand shots
- Put obstacles in the net
- Add targets

SHOOTING 1 – SHOOTING WHILE SKATING (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Break down the core mechanics of shooting a puck. Now add the aspect of skating.

- Coaches should explain and demonstrate the core skills of shooting while skating
- Focus on loading, weight transfer and release
- Observe players and make corrections to technique

ORGANIZATION

- Players will line up along the boards with pucks
- Have two nets set up on the other boards
- Two players will skate down and take a shot on different nets
- After they take their shot they will circle back and rejoin the group

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Load the shot
- Weight transfer, use your whole body
- Follow through on release
- Maintain hockey stance
- Head up
- Keep feet moving

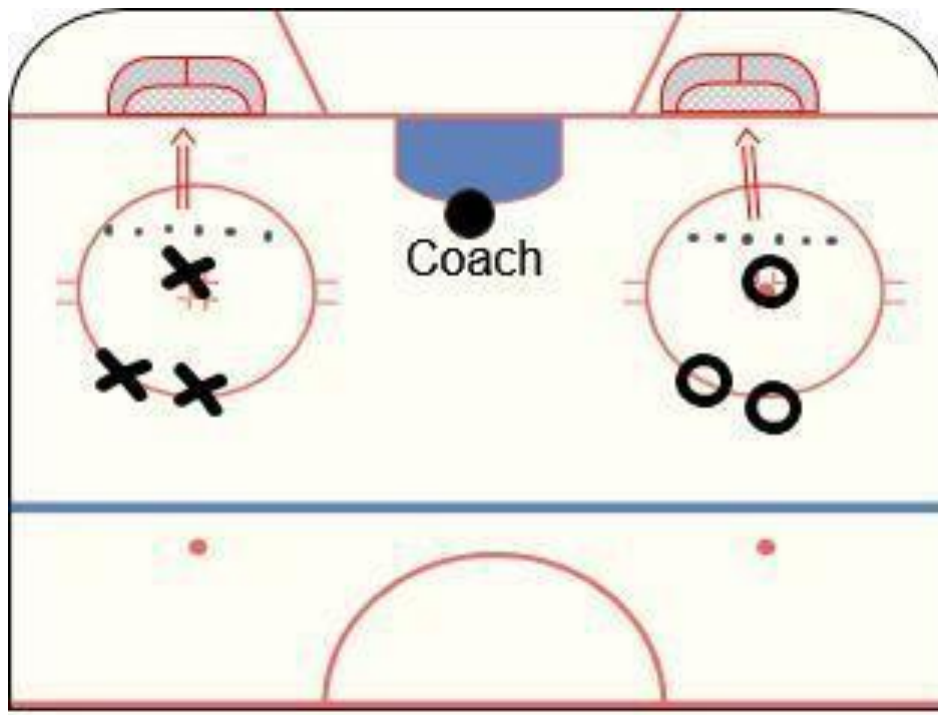
PROGRESSION

- After first player takes shot they are now a defender for the next player



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 4 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

SHOOTING 1 – SMALL AREA GAMES – TARGET SHOOTING



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Use one or two nets for this game
- Set up targets on the net in each corner
- Players will stand in a certain spot and try to hit the targets on the net
- Each player will get 6 pucks
- 1 point if you hit the net in general
- 2 points if you hit the target
- 3 points for hitting the post or crossbar

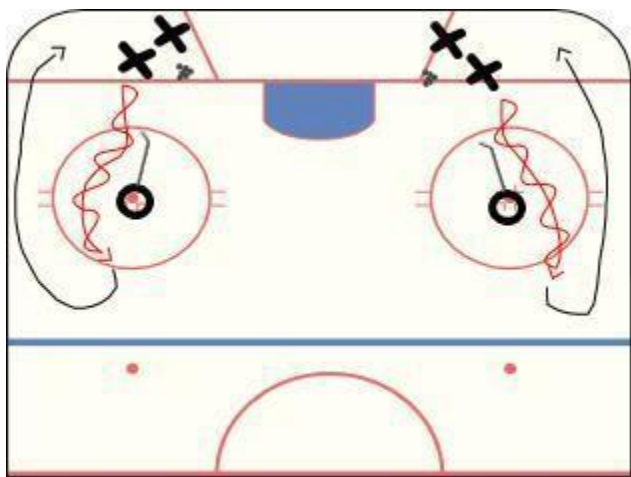
PROGRESSION

- Backhand shots only
- 2 players can be in the corner with pucks, they will take turns passing to the shooter



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 5 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

CHECKING 1 – POKE CHECK (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach players the skill of puke checking

ORGANIZATION

- One group of players will be offensive players with pucks
- One player will be placed in middle of faceoff circle as defender
- Players with puck will go one at a time toward the defensive player
- Defensive player will attempt puke check
- Switch defensive player after a couple tries

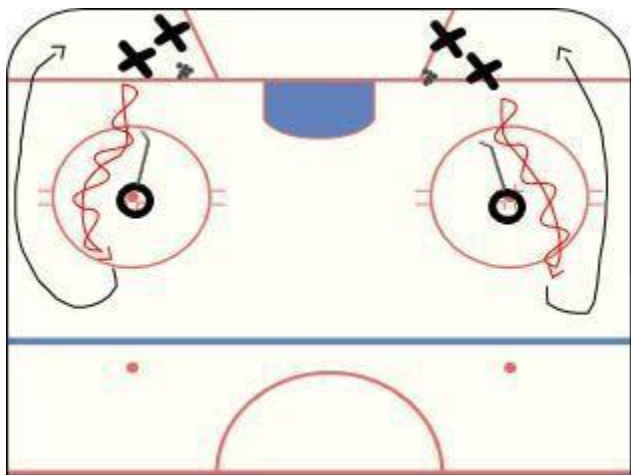
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Full arm extension
- Target the puck

PROGRESSION

- The defender can move within a specific space

CHECKING 1 – SWEEP CHECK (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach players the skill of sweep check. Explain how it is different from puke check.

ORGANIZATION

- One group of players will be offensive players with pucks
- One player will be placed in middle of faceoff circle as defender
- Players with puck will go one at a time toward the defensive player
- Defensive player will attempt sweep check
- Switch defensive player after a couple tries

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Full arm extension
- Target the puck

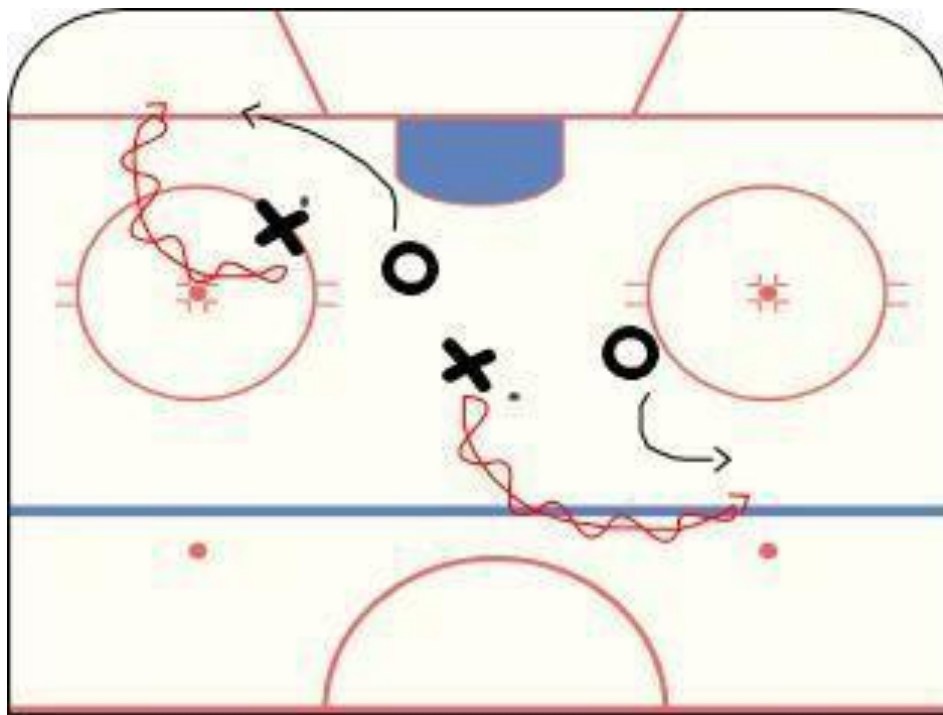
PROGRESSION

- The defender can move within a specific space



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 5 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

CHECKING 1 – SMALL AREA GAMES – PUCK PIRATES



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Half the players have a puck, the other half does not
- Players without pucks must try and steal pucks from other players
- Players with puck must try and protect puck

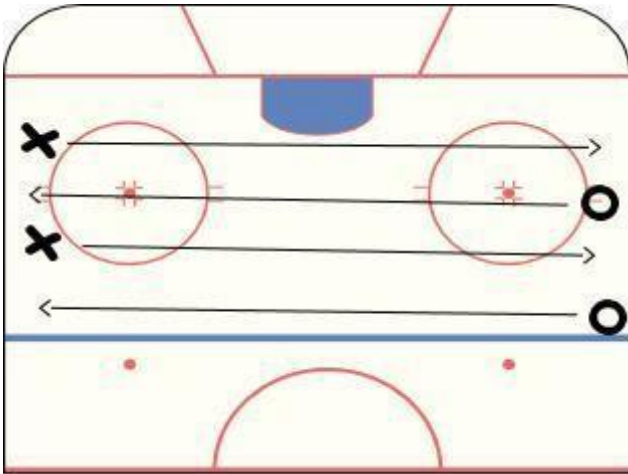
PROGRESSION

- Confined area: players must stay in the faceoff circles
- Add teammates, 2 on 2



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 6 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

SKATING 2 – EDGE WORK (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach the concept of what edges are and how to use them. Explain inside edge and outside edge.

- Explain where the inside edge is and how to use it
- Review hockey stance
- Explain proper stride and recover to middle after each stride
- Review glide

ORGANIZATION

- Players push off one with one leg, with their other leg they glide using their inside edge for a short time
- Continue this way down the ice alternating legs
- Do the same for the outside edge after a couple laps

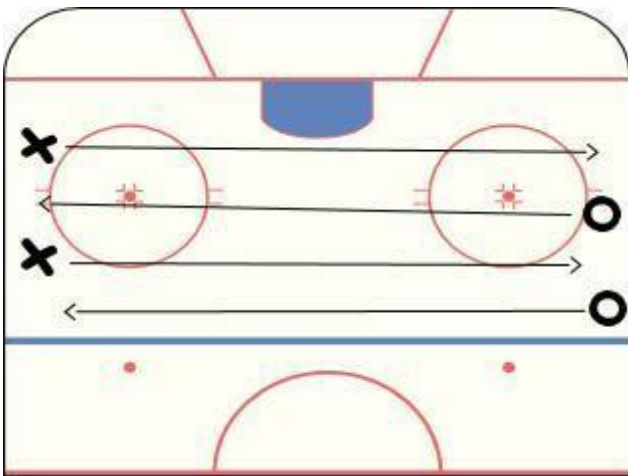
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Push with your heel
- Maintain proper hockey stance
- Control your stick

PROGRESSION

- Add Jump stride
- Jump into each stride landing on the inside edge
- Teaches balance and explosiveness

SKATING 2 – FORWARD C-CUTS (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Continue teaching edgework.

- Explain where the inside edge is and how to use it
- Review hockey stance
- Explain proper stride and recover to middle after each stride
- Review glide

ORGANIZATION

- Players line up along board (can split them up on either side for space)
- Players will skate forwards using c-cut technique with one leg
- Ensure they keep both feet on the ice
- Once they reach the other side, repeat but using the other leg

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Push with your heel
- Maintain proper hockey stance
- Control your stick

PROGRESSION

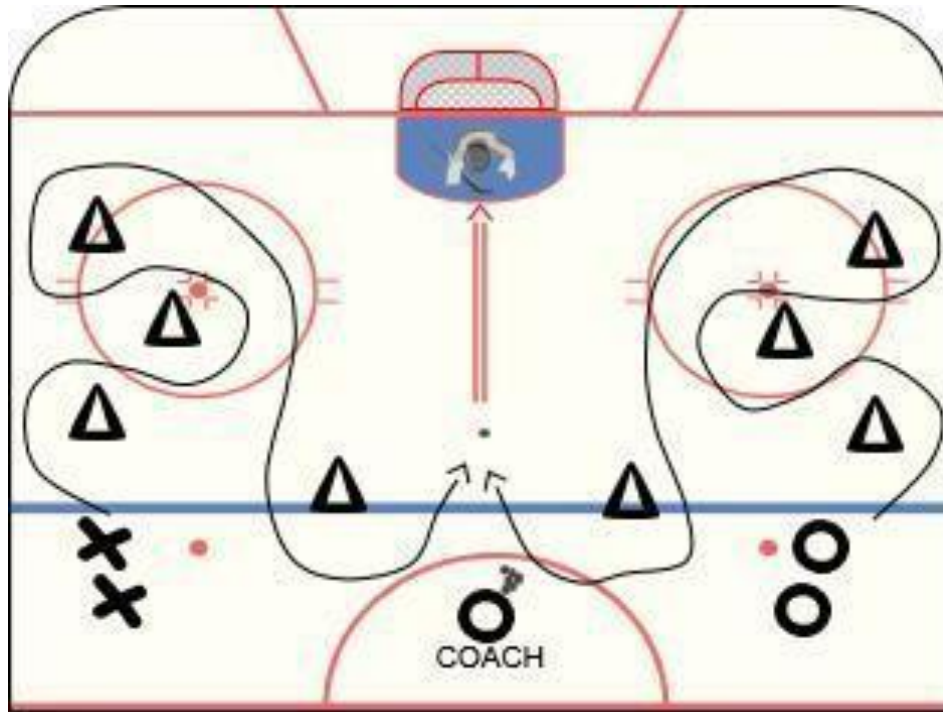


-
- Bubble technique
 - Use both feet at the same time, pushing with inside edges and recovering to middle
 - Backwards c-cuts



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 6 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

SKATING 2 – SMALL AREA GAMES – PUCK RACE (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will line up on opposite sides at the blue line
- When the Coach says "go" they will skate toward the first pylon entering on the outside and continue to skate through each pylon
- The Coach will place a puck in the middle of the ice
- After the players have skated around the last pylon they will race for the puck and try to score

PROGRESSION

- Add another pylon
- Do tight turns around the pylons
- Skate backwards

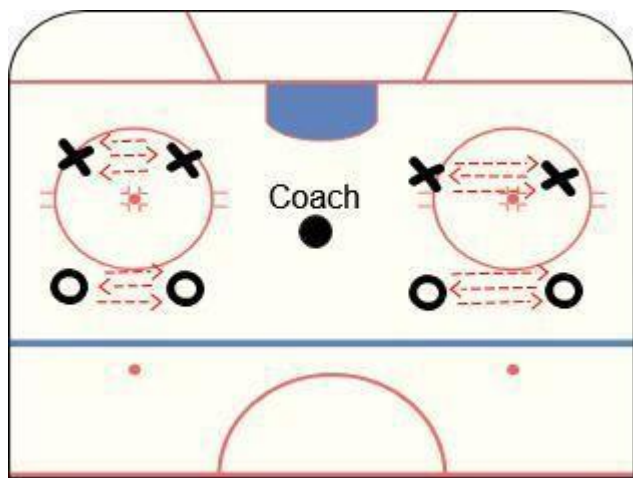
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 7 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

PASSING 2 – ONE TOUCH PASSES (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach players how to do proper one touch passes and explain when the one touch pass should be used.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will be in partners
- Players will stay stationary and complete one touch passes to their partner
- Be sure to make corrections and adjustments to players' technique

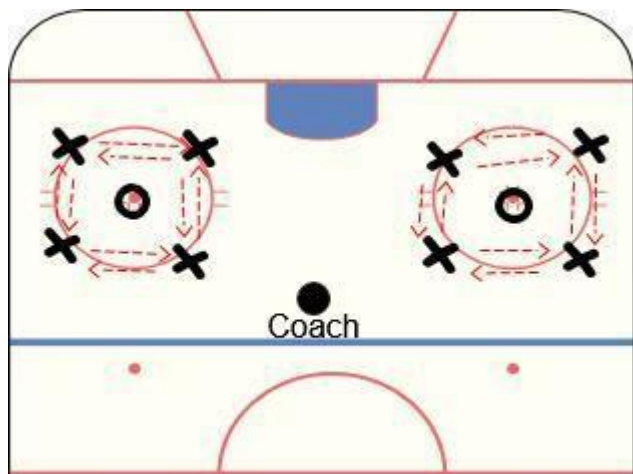
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Firm bottom hand
- Quick release
- Point to your target on release

PROGRESSION

- Add movement
- Add one defender to each set of partners

PASSING 2 – CIRCLE ONE TOUCH PASSES (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Continue to build on points about one touch passes. Explain how you can use more passing options in this drill.

ORGANIZATION

- A small group of players will be lined up around the faceoff circle
- One puck per circle
- Player will one touch pass to each other in any order they like

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Firm bottom hand
- Quick release
- Point to your target on release

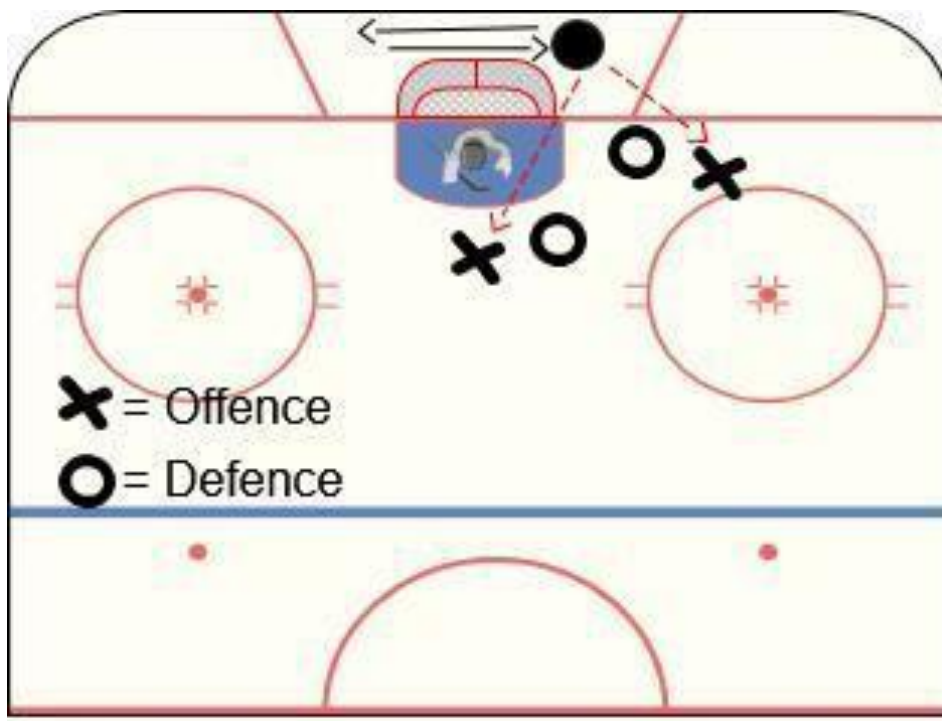
PROGRESSION

- Add a defender in the middle of the circle
- Defender must stay within circle and try to intercept passes
- Defender can also try to poke check puck away from puck carrier
- If the defender intercepts or steals the puck, the player they got the puck from is not in the middle
- Offensive players must remain stationary



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 7 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

PASSING 2 – SMALL AREA GAMES – GRETZKY GAME



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Use either one or two nets (one or two games) depending on number of players
- Teams will consist of 2-3 players
- Only one team will be on the offensive, the other will defend
- One player will be "Gretzky" and always stay behind the net or below the goal line
- Defenders cannot go below the goal line
- Gretzky's teammates will try to get open for passes, they can also pass back to Gretzky
- The objective is to score on the goal -Be sure to switch roles after goals or certain period of time
- Emphasize the use of one touch passes and give and go's

PROGRESSION

- Add a second Gretzky (one for each team)
- Gretzky's can check each other

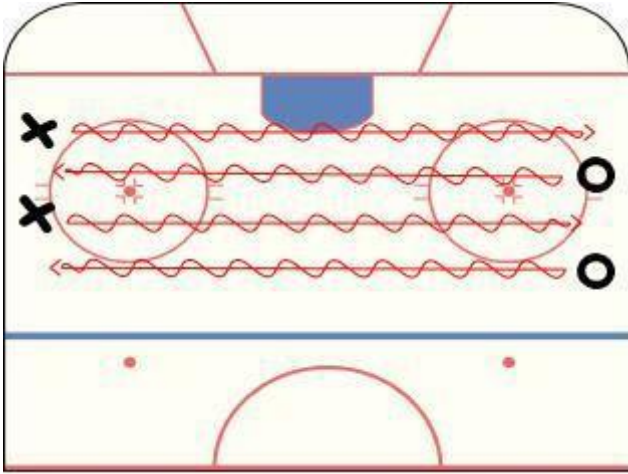
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 8 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

PUCK CONTROL 2 – REVIEW STICK HANDLING WHILE SKATING (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Review stick handling while skating. Go into more detail. Try other skills like toe-drag.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will each have a puck and line up along the boards
- They will skate to the other side stick handling in front of their body, keeping head up. Extend range of motion.
- Ensure they are maintaining proper hockey stance and doing proper strides

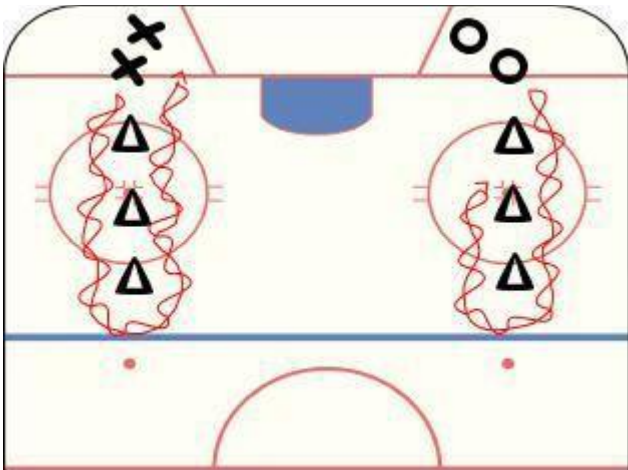
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Head up
- Hands away from body
- Keep your feet moving (shuffle skate)

PROGRESSION

- Drop down to one knee while moving and get back up, repeat the entire way down
- Stick handle from forehand, backhand and behind
- Go further out with motion, wider stick handles
- Toe drags (explain first)
- Backwards skating

PUCK CONTROL 2 – PYLONS (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Use puck control skills to get around obstacles.

ORGANIZATION

- Pylons will be set up in a straight line
- Players will be lined up with pucks
- One at a time they will skate toward the pylons stick handling through them, when they reach the last pylon they circle back and do the same thing the other way
- For the first time they stick handle in front
- Then they do from one side (forehand), then the other (backhand)
- Players can then do a combination alternating between front, forehand and backhand between the pylons

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Head up
- Hands away from body
- Keep your feet moving (shuffle skate)
- Wide range of motion

PROGRESSION

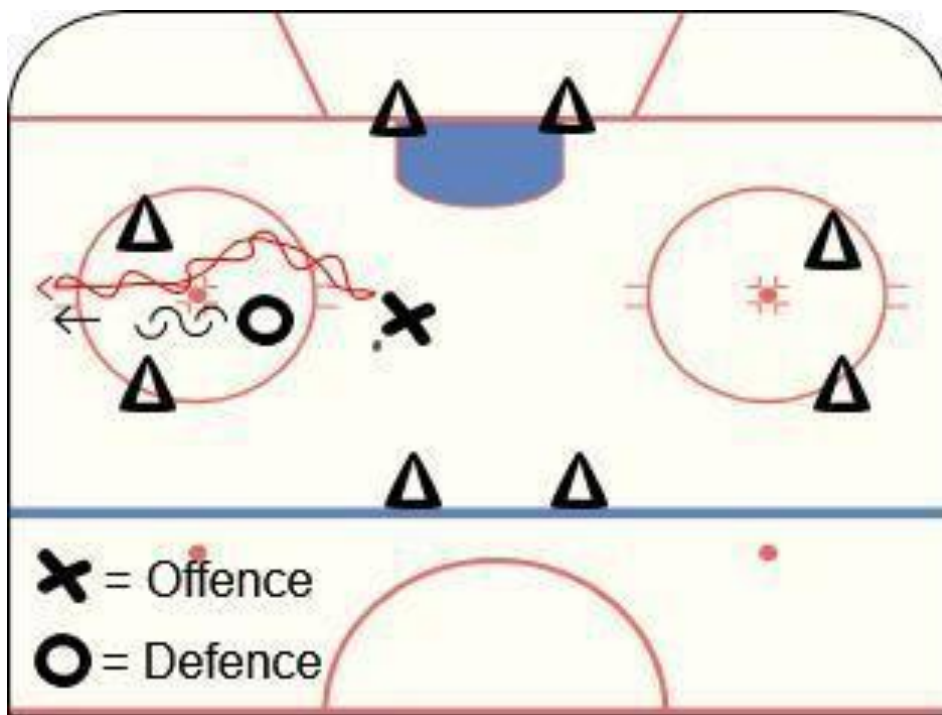


2 players can go in a figure 8 motion around pylons



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 8 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

PUCK CONTROL 2 – SMALL AREA GAMES – BETWEEN CONES FOR POINTS



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Pairs of pylons will be set up as "gates" around the zone
- Every second player will have a puck and the other player will defend or steal the puck
- Players with the puck will try and score points by skating through the gates with the puck
- When a player scores they must give the puck to the defender and they switch roles

PROGRESSION

- Use only one gate, make it a little bigger
- Player must beat the defender and skate through the gate still
- After skating through the gate they go in for a shot on goal

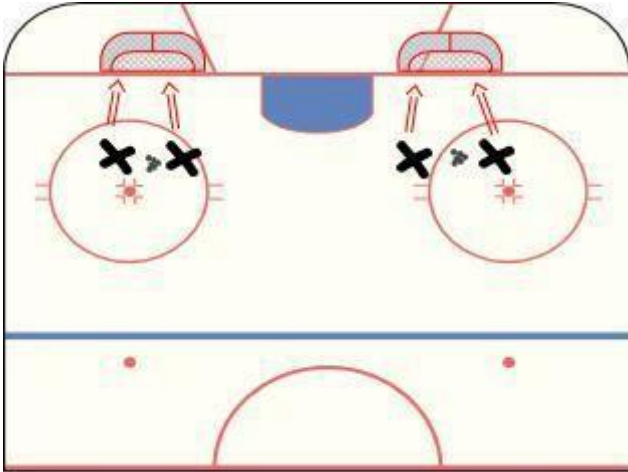
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If no goalie, alternate the net in some way or add obstacles to make it more difficult to score



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 9 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

SHOOTING 2 – STATIONARY BACKHAND SHOOTING (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Review the breakdown of the mechanics of shooting a puck. Focus more on backhand shots.

- Coaches should explain and demonstrate the fundamentals of shooting on the backhand
- Focus on loading, weight transfer and release
- Observe players and make corrections to technique

ORGANIZATION

- Players should each have a couple pucks
- Players line up in front of nets and take shots on goal while stationary

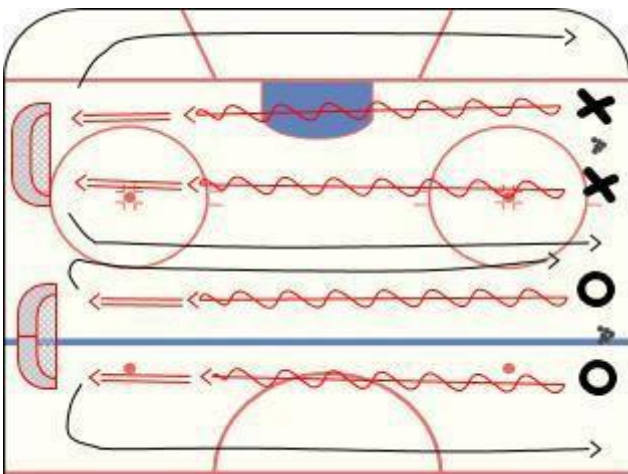
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Load the shot
- Weight transfer
- Follow through on release

PROGRESSION

- Add stick handling before shot
- Give players targets

SHOOTING 2 – BACKHAND SHOOTING WHILE SKATING (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Break down the mechanics of shooting a puck. Now add the aspect of skating.

- Coaches should explain and demonstrate the mechanics of shooting on the backhand while skating
- Focus on loading, weight transfer and release
- Observe players and make corrections to technique

ORGANIZATION

- Players will line up along the boards with pucks
- Have two nets set up on the other boards
- Two players will skate down and take a shot on different nets
- After they take their shot they will circle back and rejoin the group

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Load the shot
- Weight transfer
- Follow through on release

PROGRESSION

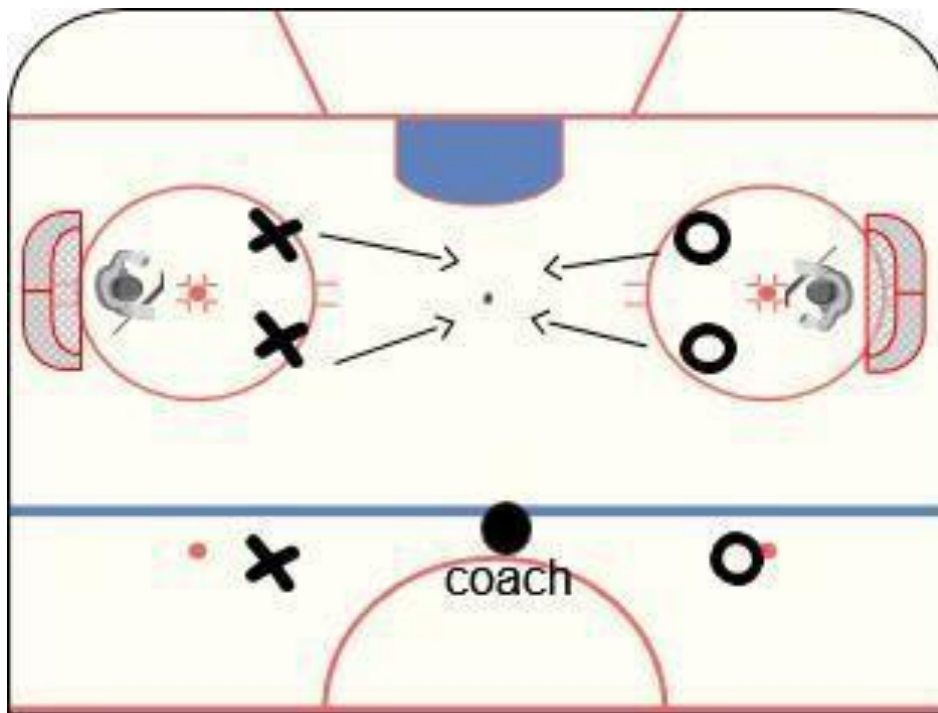


-
- Add an obstacle (tire or have a coach stand there) in the middle
 - Player must fake going forehand side and then go backhand side around the obstacle and take backhand shot



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 9 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

SHOOTING 2 – SMALL AREA GAMES – 2 ON 2 (MUST USE A BACKHAND SHOT)



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- 2 on 2 or 3 on 3
- Setup two nets on either side
- Players can only score using a backhand shot

PROGRESSION

- Players can only do backhand passes
- Players must pass to the coach before they can go in for a shot

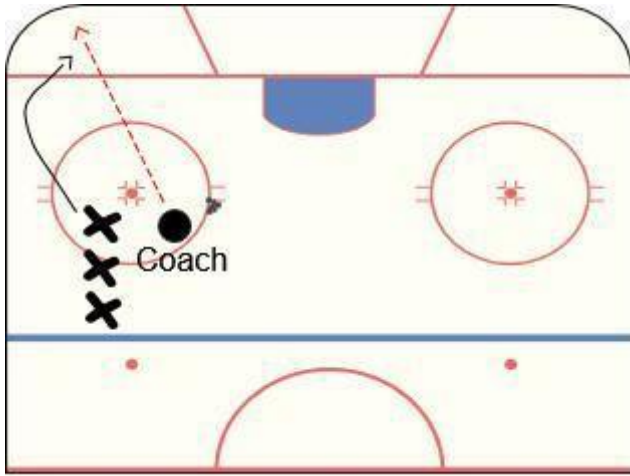
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 10 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

CHECKING 2 – CORNER RETRIEVAL (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach players the concept of puck retrieval going into a corner. Teach them about taking the proper angle.

- Explain angling
- Explain shoulder check
- Explain body position in relation to checker
- Explain the safety aspect

ORGANIZATION

- Players are in a line
- Coach will send a puck into the corner and the player will go retrieve it
- Be sure they use the skills you initially explained

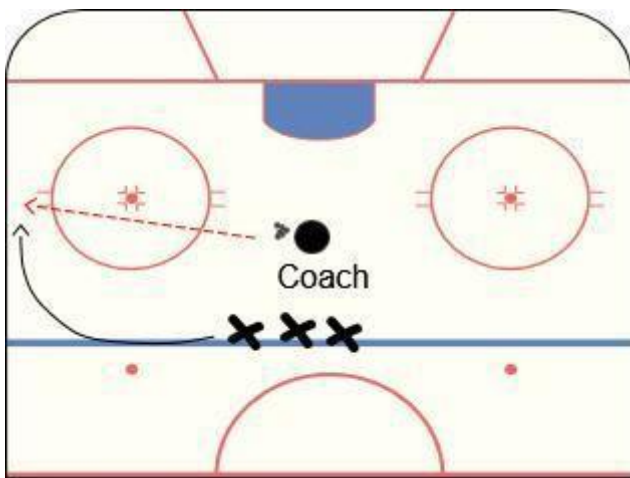
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Angling
- Shoulder check
- Body position
- Proper hockey stance

PROGRESSION

- Add a forechecker (mild pressure)
- Add a net drive

CHECKING 2 – SIDEWALL RETRIEVAL (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach players the concept of puck retrieval at the sidewall. Teach them about taking the proper angle.

- Explain angling
- Explain shoulder check
- Explain body position in relation to checker
- Explain the safety aspect

ORGANIZATION

- Players are in a line
- Coach will send a puck into the sidewall and the player will go retrieve it
- Be sure they use the skills you initially explained

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Angling
- Shoulder check
- Body position
- Proper hockey stance

PROGRESSION

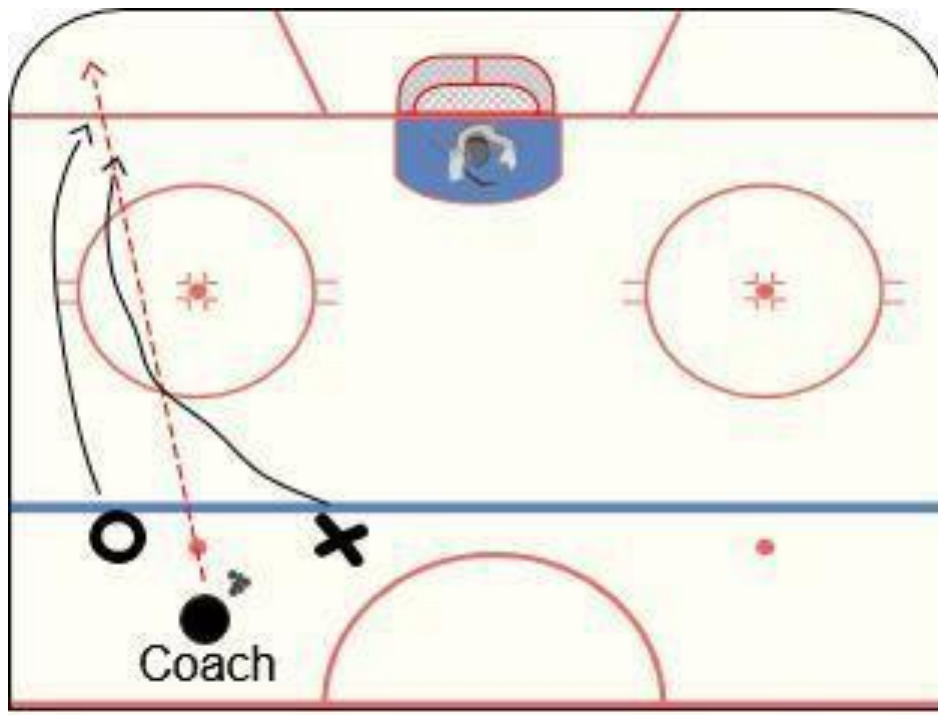


-
- add a forechecker (mild pressure)
 - add a net drive



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 10 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

CHECKING 2 – SMALL AREA GAMES – 1 ON 1 DOWN LOW



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- ❑ Coach dumps puck into corner
- ❑ 2 players skate after it, emphasize the skills previously taught
- ❑ Player that gets puck now tries to protect the puck from other player
- ❑ Player without puck tries to steal it using poke check, sweep check, etc
- ❑ The Coach will say “go” after a short period of time
- ❑ The player with the puck will go to the net to try and score

PROGRESSION

- ❑ On the first “go” two teammates will join the game, one offensive player and one defensive player
- ❑ Teammates will work together to defend and pass the puck around
- ❑ Emphasis should still be on checking and puck protection down low
- ❑ On second “go” the team with possession of the puck drives the net

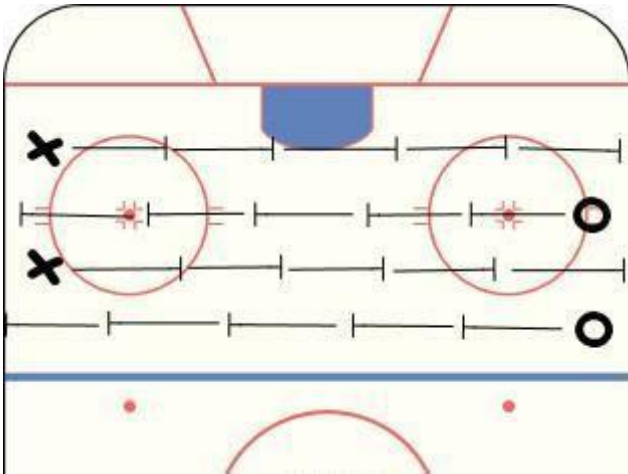
GOALIE

- ❑ If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- ❑ If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 11 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

SKATING 3 – STOPS AND STARTS (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Explain what a proper hockey stop is and what it should look like.

- Review proper hockey stance for starting position
- Explain quick strides
- Emphasize proper complete stops

ORGANIZATION

- Players line up along the boards
- Players take a couple strides at about 50% speed and come to complete stop facing one direction
- Repeat down the ice until you reach the boards, then go the other way but when you stop face the other direction

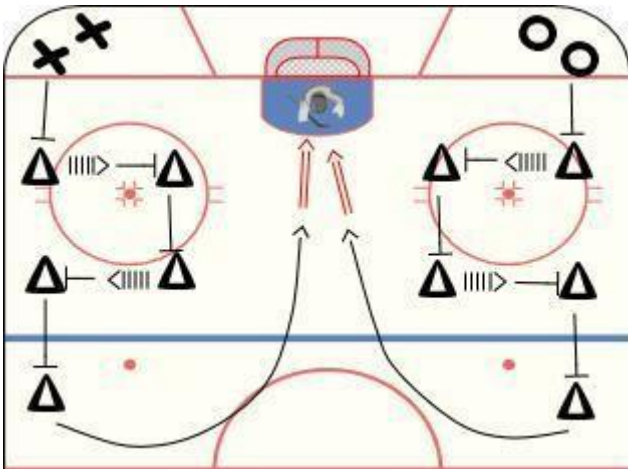
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- chest up
- knees bent
- turn hips into stop
- use both feet, inside edge and outside edge

PROGRESSION

- Take a couple quick strides at 100% speed and then stop
- Alternate directions when you stop as you make your way down the ice
- Add a puck

SKATING 3 – STOPS AND STARTS WITH SHOT (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Focus is on proper hockey stops with puck. Crossovers and stops with puck will also be incorporated.

ORGANIZATION

- Players start from each corner
- Players skate forwards toward the pylons with a puck and stop at the first pylon
- After they stop they do crossovers toward the next pylon
- Repeat for the next three pylons
- After the last stop, skate towards the net and take a shot

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- chest up
- knees bent
- turn hips into stop
- use both feet, inside edge and outside edge

PROGRESSION

- Players skate without puck
- Once they do final stop the coach will place a puck in the middle for them to retrieve
- Finish with shot on net

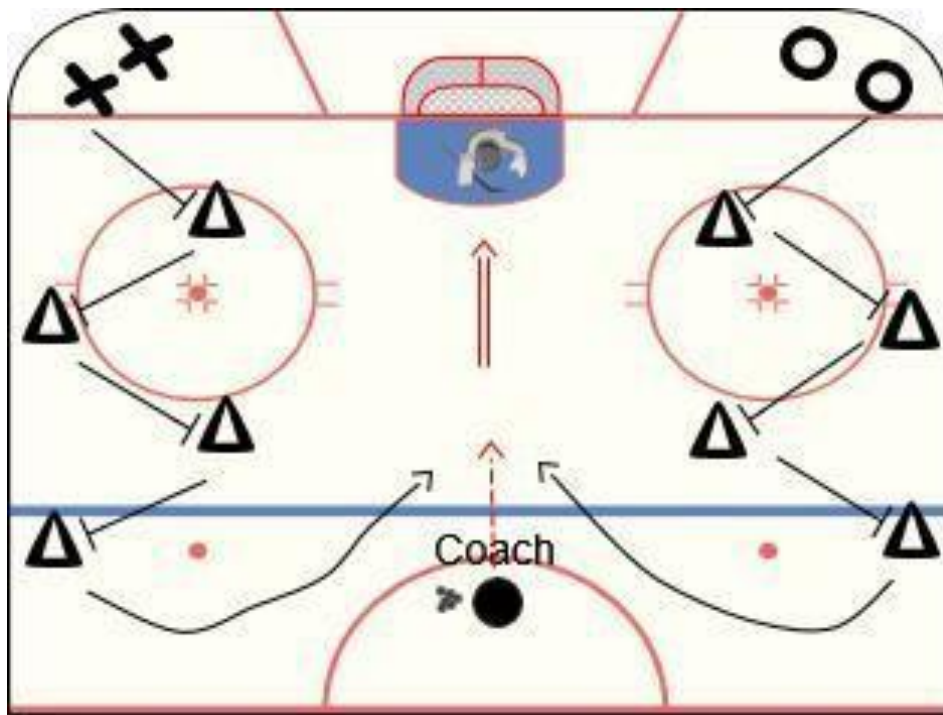
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 11 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

SKATING 3 – SMALL AREA GAMES – STOPS AND STARTS RACE



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Players in opposite corners
- Coach sits at blue line with pucks
- On "go" players skate towards the pylons, at each pylon they must do a complete hockey stop
- After they complete the last pylon they race for the puck at the middle of the ice
- First player to the puck takes the puck to the net and tries to score
- Other players tries to check puck carrier

PROGRESSION

- After the player with the puck gets a shot on net, the two players stop in front of the net
- The player that won the initial puck race will try to get open to receive a pass from their line and get a second shot on net

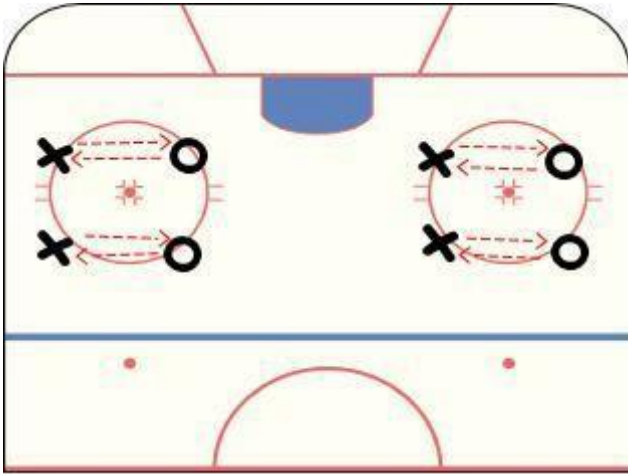
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 12 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

PASSING 3 – REVIEW STATIONARY PASSES (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Review proper passing technique. Also review proper technique for receiving a pass.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will set up in pairs with one puck
- With their partner they will make passes to each other while standing stationary

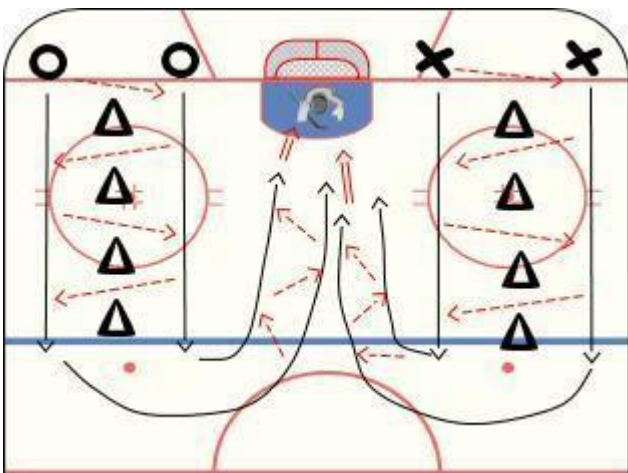
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Cushion pass
- Point at target on follow through

PROGRESSION

- Start with forehand passes
- Then go to backhand passes
- Receive on forehand and make backhand pass
- Receive on backhand and make forehand pass
- One touch passes
- Add movement
- Add defenders (can be Coaches)

PASSING 3 – PASS THROUGH PYLONS (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Practice accurate passing. Emphasize proper follow through for passes to help direct the pass.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will line up in each corner with pucks
- In partners, players will skate up the ice along each side of the pylons
- Players will try to complete passes between each of the pylons
- After they have passed through the last pylon they can go to the net for a 2 on 0

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Cushion pass
- Point at target on follow through
- Lead pass to where player is going

PROGRESSION

- One player can skate backwards as they make passes
- Coach can sit in slot and try to defend or add obstacles

GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net

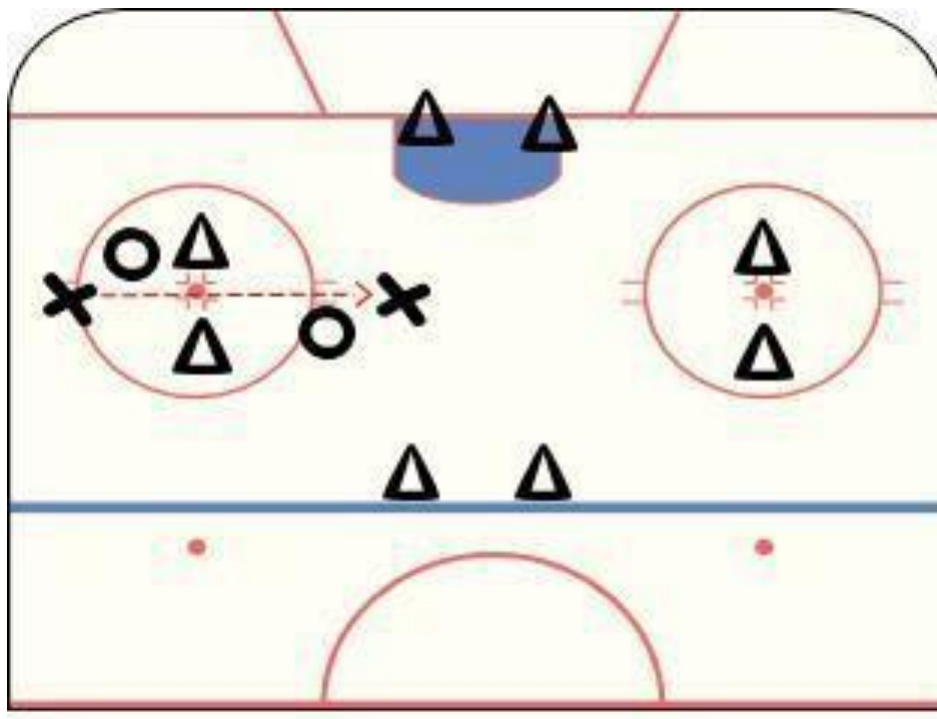


-
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 12 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

PASSING 3 – SMALL AREA GAMES – PASS FOR POINTS



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Pairs of pylons (referred to as "Gates" for this drill) will be set up throughout the zone
- Players will be put into teams of two
- There will be one puck for every two teams
- The team with the puck will try to complete passes through the gates, needing one player on each side of the gate
- For each completed pass the team gets one point
- The other team will try to check the other team and steal the puck

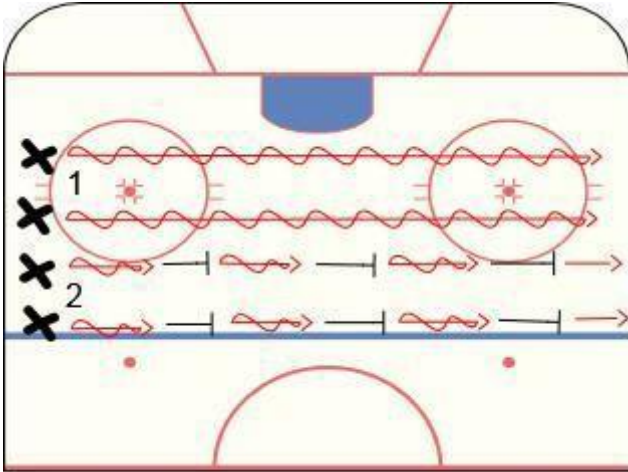
PROGRESSION

- Add teammates, 3 on 3
- Make gates smaller
- Reduce the number of gates



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 13 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

PUCK CONTROL 3 – OPEN ICE CARRY (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Explain how to push the puck up with one hand. Explain how this skill should be used when you have open ice and move most efficiently.

- Explain to players how to use one hand on the stick to push puck ahead

ORGANIZATION

- Players will line up along the boards with pucks
- They will skate and push the puck up using one hand on the stick
- Make corrections and adjustments to technique

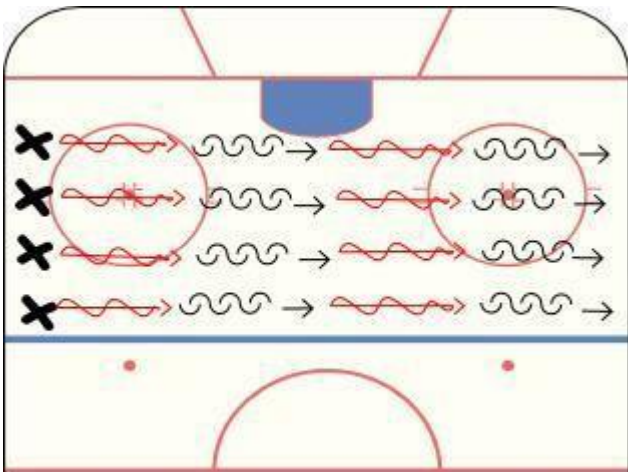
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Control arm and stick
- Keep the puck out front
- Maintain proper strides

PROGRESSION

- Add stops and starts
- Coach will yell “stop” and “go”, players still need to use one hand push for “go” and return to both hands on stick for “stop”

PUCK CONTROL 3 – PIVOT WITH PUCK (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Review proper pivot technique. Explain how to pivot while you have the puck on your stick. Explain when this technique would be used.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will line up along boards with pucks
- First they skate forwards stick handling, then they pivot to backwards
- Repeat this process all the way down the ice

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Chest up
- Knees bent
- Control upper body on pivot
- Don't pop up

PROGRESSION

- Start backwards
- Add stops and starts when you switch from skating forwards to backwards



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 13 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

PUCK CONTROL 3 – SMALL AREA GAMES – 1 ON 1 IN CIRCLE



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- One or two games at a time depending on number of players
- Two players will play 1 on 1 in the faceoff circle
- Players will try to get the puck from each other / keep puck away from other player
- Coach will say "go" after a short period of time to the first group
- The player with the puck can go to the net and try to score, the other player will try to defend
- The coach will do the same for the other group afterwards

PROGRESSION

- On first "go" the players are no longer confined to the faceoff circle
- They need to keep their head up and watch for other players
- Utilize the open space
- On second "go" the player with possession from the first group can go in for a shot
- The coach will do the same for the other group afterwards

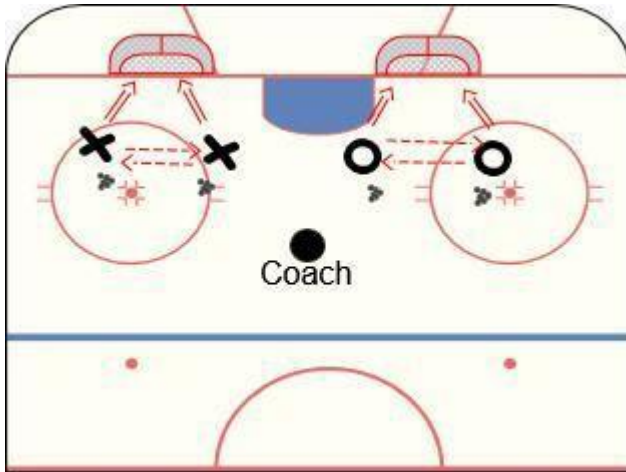
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 14 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

SHOOTING 3 – STATIONARY SHOT AFTER RECEIVING A PASS (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Practicing the core skills involved with shooting after receiving a pass.

ORGANIZATION

- Set up two nets
- Players will be in front of the nets with pucks
- One player will pass the puck to the other
- The player receiving the puck must control the puck and get a shot off
- Emphasize proper technique and quick release
- Take turns passing and shooting

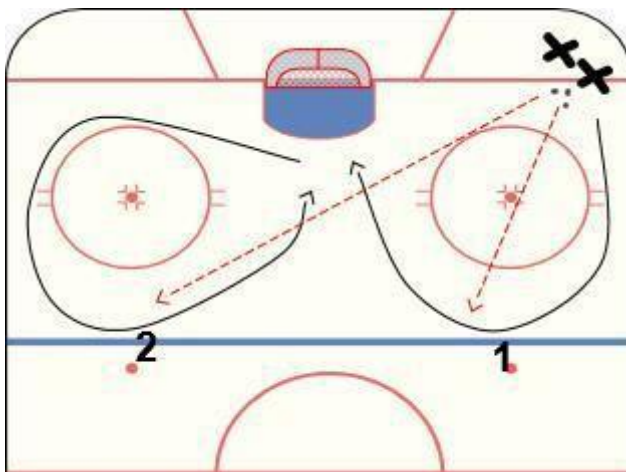
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Control pass
- Load shot
- Weight transfer
- Follow through on release

PROGRESSION

- Player receiving pass moves around to simulate finding open ice
- One-timers (half slapshot or snapshot)

SHOOTING 3 – CIRCLES (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Practice receiving passes while skating and getting shot off quickly.

ORGANIZATION

- First Player skates out of corner without a puck around the top of the faceoff circle
- Second player sends a pass as they reach the top of the circle
- First player takes a shot on net shortly after receiving the pass
- After the shot they rejoin the line

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Control the pass
- Load the shot
- Weight transfer
- Follow through on release
- Quick release

PROGRESSION

- After first player takes shot they continue on to the next faceoff circle, skating from the bottom of the circle up to the top.
- Once they reach the top of the circle they will receive a second pass and take a shot

GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net

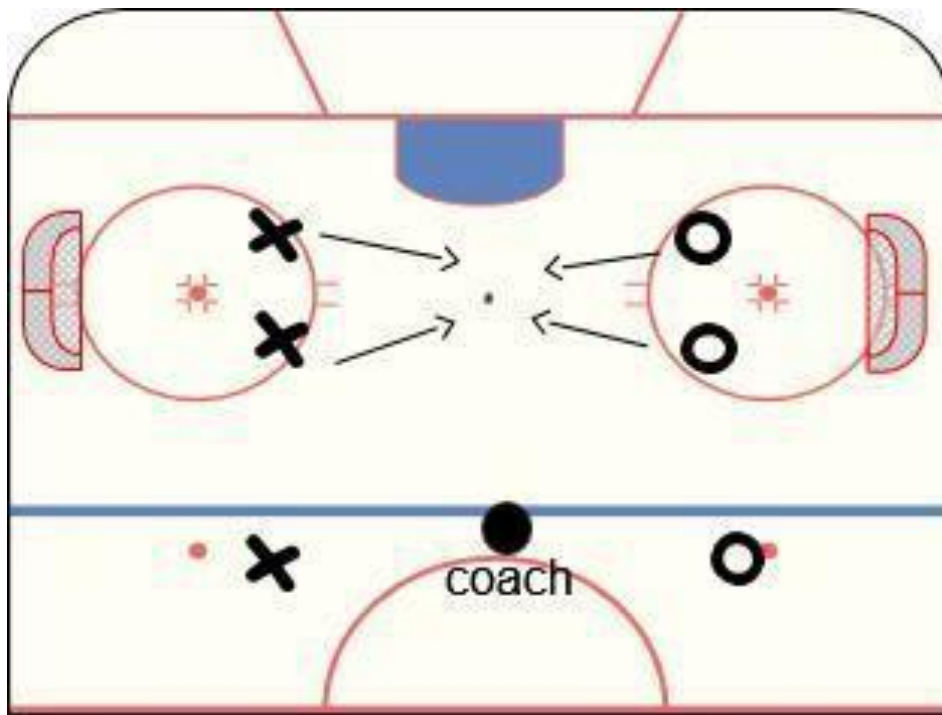


-
- If no goalie, alternate the net in some way or add obstacles to make it more difficult to score



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 14 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

SHOOTING 3 – SMALL AREA GAMES – 2 ON 2 POSTS



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- 2 on 2 or 3 on 3
- Set up two nets on either side
- Players can only score by hitting the posts
- Hit the post (puck on ice) = 1 point
- Hit the post (puck is in the air) = 2 points
- Hit the crossbar = 3 points

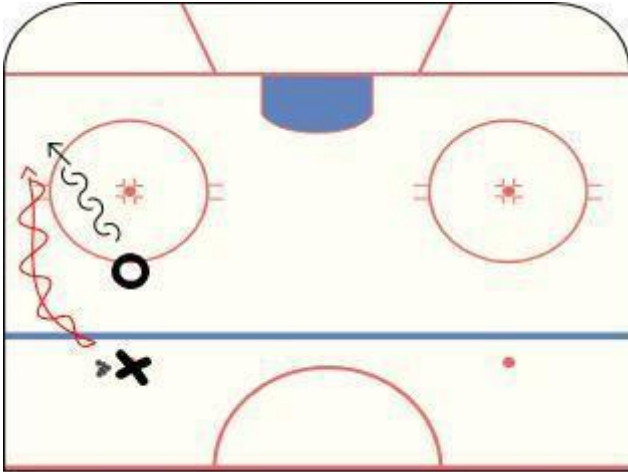
PROGRESSION

- Add targets in the net to use instead of posts
- Players must pass to the coach before they can shoot
- Players can only do backhand shots



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 15 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

CHECKING 3 – BACKWARDS ANGLING (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach players how to angle while skating backwards.

- Explain and demonstrate how angling while skating backwards should look
- Explain why and when it is used

ORGANIZATION

- One player will skate forwards with the puck along the boards
- Another player will skate backwards and angle the player with the puck and stick check them

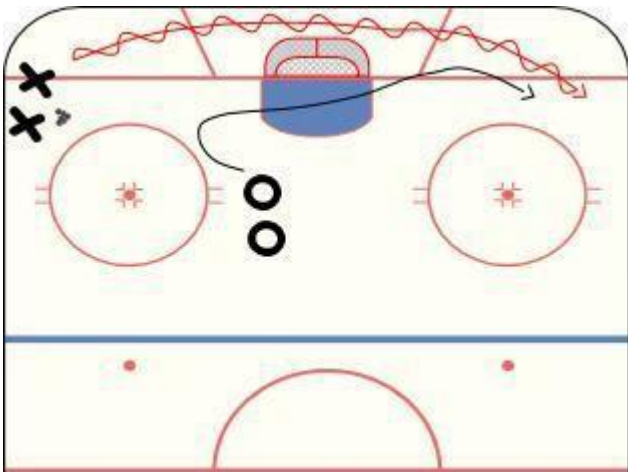
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Match speed
- Body positioning
- Angling
- Utilize the boards
- Proper hockey stance

PROGRESSION

- Add net drive
- Defender can start in the corner and skate up, pivot to backwards and then angle puck carrier

CHECKING 3 – ANGLING BEHIND THE NET (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Review angling, puck retrieval and shoulder check. Also talk about timing the check.

ORGANIZATION

- Two lines: one with pucks in corner, one without pucks in front of net
- One player will start with puck and the other will start without one
- The puck carrier skates behind net
- Player without puck will go shortly after them and time their check as the player comes out from behind the net

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Match speed
- Body positioning
- Angling
- Utilize the boards
- Proper hockey stance

PROGRESSION

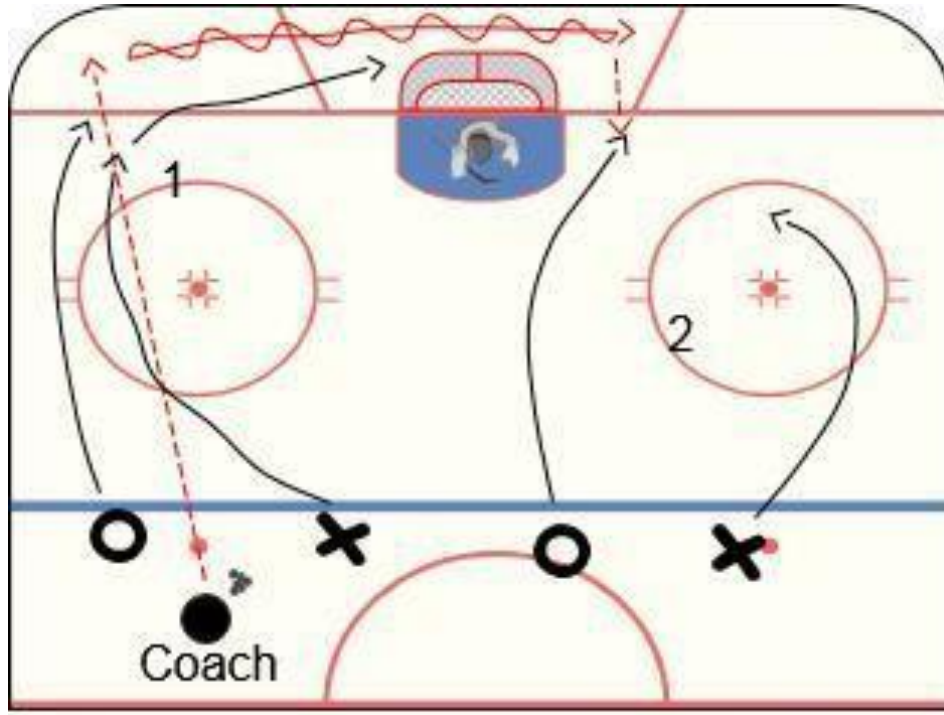


-
- Puck carrier has the option to stop behind the net and change their direction. They can also stop and fake one way and go the other



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 15 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

CHECKING 3 – 1 ON 1 + 2 ON 2 DOWN LOW



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- 2 teams
- Coach dumps puck into corner
- 1 player from each team skates after the puck, emphasize the skills previously taught (angling, puck protection)
- Player that gets the puck now tries to protect the puck from other player
- Player without puck tries to steal it using poke check, sweep check, etc
- The Coach will say “go” after a short period of time and then another player for each team joins in making it a 2 on 2
- Teammates will pass puck amongst themselves while the other team tries to get puck
- The Coach will say “go” again
- Team with the puck tries to score, other team defends

PROGRESSION

- Players must stay below the goal line until the second “go”
- Add a third player to each team

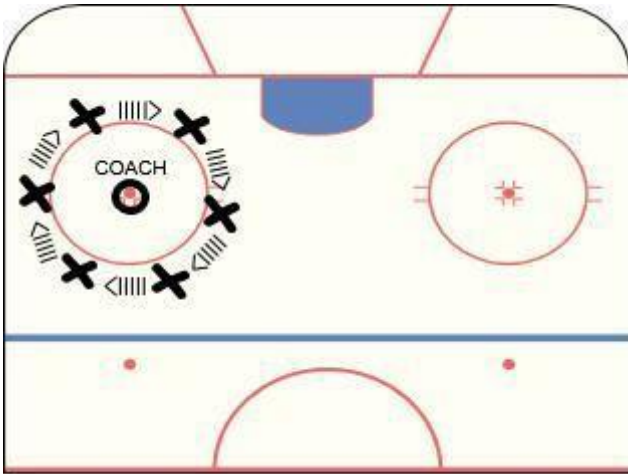
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 16 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

SKATING 4 – CROSSOVERS (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Introduce Crossovers. Explain the proper technique and when it should be used.

ORGANIZATION

- All the players are lined up around the faceoff circle (use both circles if you need)
- Coach stands in the middle explaining and demonstrating technique
- After the explanation is done players will crossover in one direction around the circle, facing toward the coach at all times
- Stop, make corrections and then go other direction

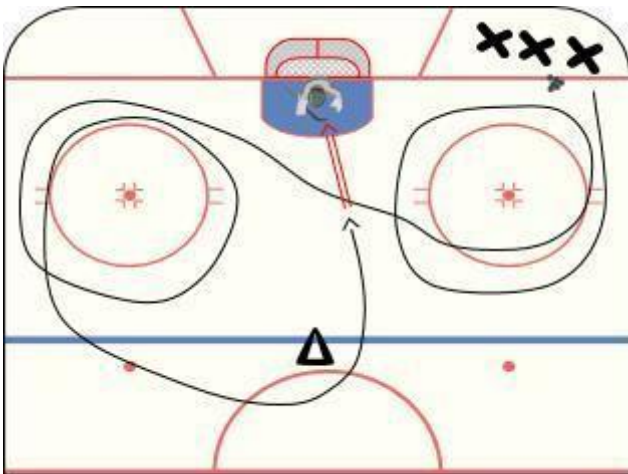
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- full cross of the legs
- push using leg underneath your body
- maintain proper hockey stance
- control your stick
- head up

PROGRESSION

- Add puck
- Add stops, change direction after stop

SKATING 4 – CIRCLES (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Building on the skills of crossovers and pivoting that was introduced earlier.

ORGANIZATION

- Starting in the corner, players will skate a full circle around the faceoff circle in a figure 8 pattern with a puck
- Make sure the players focus on the crossover aspect of the drill
- Once they complete the last circle they will skate around the pylon placed in the middle of the blue line and then go in on net for a shot

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Practicing proper crossover technique
- Maintain proper hockey stance
- Control the puck, keep out front
- Head up

PROGRESSION

- Starting in the corner players will skate a full circle around the faceoff circle in a figure 8 pattern with the puck
- When they reach the top of the circle they will pivot backwards, then pivot back to forwards once they reach the bottom of the circle
- Repeat for the second circle

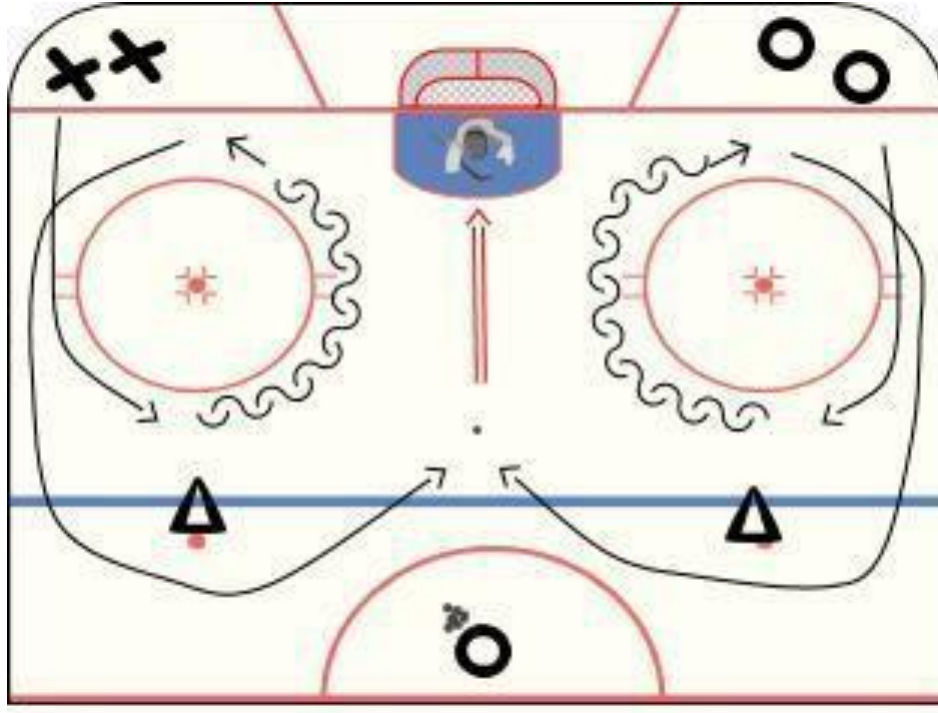
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 16 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

SKATING 4 – SMALL AREA GAMES – RACE TO THE PUCK WITH PIVOT



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Players start in opposite corners
- On "go" they skate forwards around the faceoff circle, once they reach the top of the circle they pivot to backwards and proceed to the bottom of the circle and switch back to forwards
- Then they skate around the pylon at the neutral zone faceoff dot
- The Coach places a puck in the middle of the ice and the players race toward it and take a shot on net

PROGRESSION

- Start backwards
- After the first shot has been taken, the player that had possession of the puck finds open ice in front of the net
- They will then receive a second pass from their line. Followed up with a shot on net.
- Other player can continue to defend

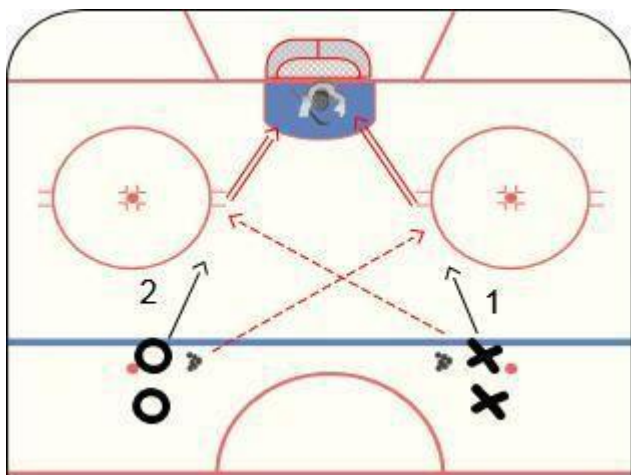
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 17 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

PASSING 4 – LEADING A PASS (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach players how to lead a pass to a moving player.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will form two lines by the blue line
- When the drill starts one player will begin skating forwards looking for a pass
- A player with a puck will then lead the skating player with a pass
- Once the player receives a pass they will go in for a shot
- Alternate lines
- Repeat

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Explain to players how to lead a pass
- Explain when you should lead a pass
- Demonstrate leading a pass

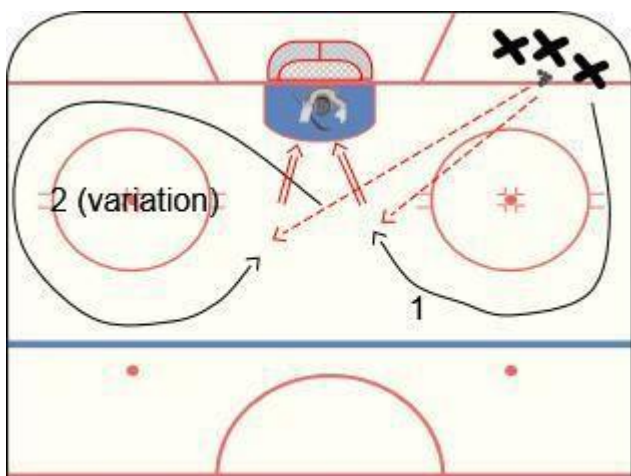
PROGRESSION

- Add tires or pylons in the middle of the ice
- Run the drill in a more continuous fashion (if numbers allow it). Right after a player makes a pass they take off and receive a pass

GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets

PASSING 4 – LEADING A PASS INTO THE SLOT (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Teach players how to lead a pass to an oncoming player. Demonstrate leading a pass to an oncoming player.

ORGANIZATION

- Players are in one corner with pucks (you can do both corners if you want)
- First player skates around the top of the circle and enters the slot looking for a pass
- Next player in line has a puck and leads the pass into the slot for the first player to receive
- Once the first player receives the pass they take a shot on goal and then return to the line
- Next player skates up to receive pass
- Repeat

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Puck placement
- Head up
- Follow through on pass
- Show target (stick on the ice)

PROGRESSION

- Add second shot
- After first shot is done player must continue around second circle and receive second pass in slot

GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some

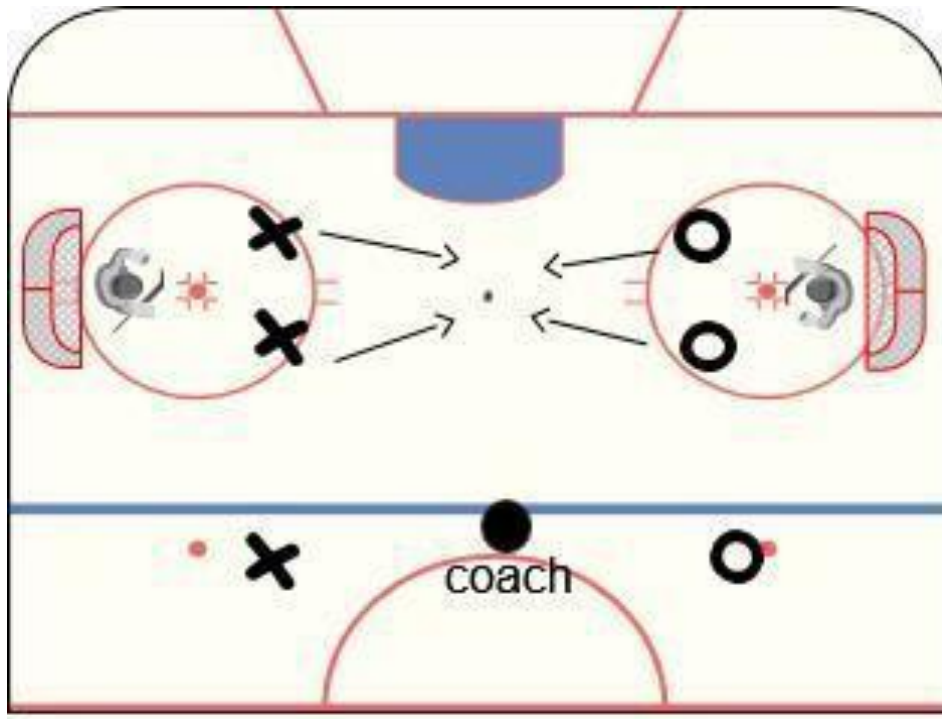


way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 17 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

PASSING 4 – SMALL AREA GAMES – 2 ON 2 MUST PASS



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- 2 on 2 or 3 on 3
- Setup two nets on either side
- Players must complete a specific number of passes (determined by coach) before they are allowed to shoot on goal

PROGRESSION

- Players must complete a pass to the coach before they can take a shot on net
- Players can only do backhand passes

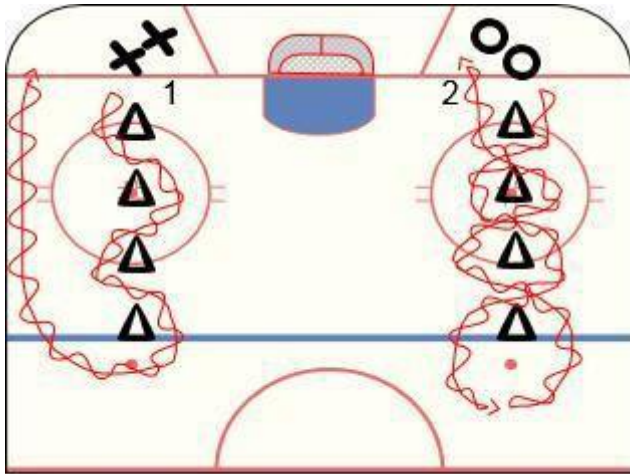
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 18 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

PUCK CONTROL 4 – WEAVE (PART 1 OF 2)



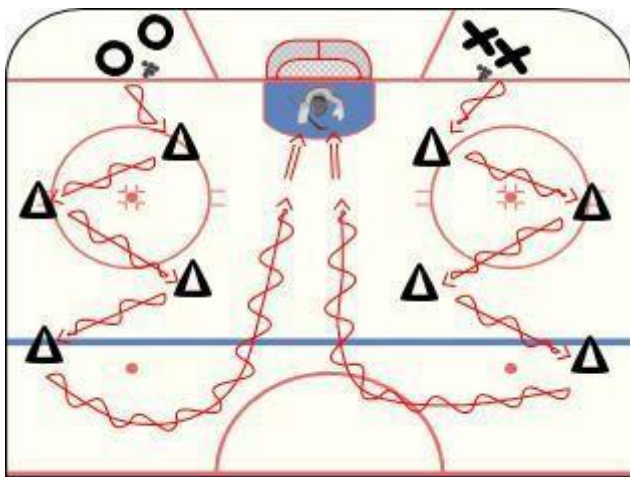
OBJECTIVE

Players will be challenged to use the variety of puck control skills

PROGRESSION

- After last pylon circle back and go through pylons once more
- Add shot at the end
- Do tight turns around each pylon
- Skate backwards

PUCK CONTROL 4 – STICKHANDLING WITH STOPS AND STARTS (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Practice stick handling while also performing starts and stops.

ORGANIZATION

- Alternating lines
- Players will skate toward pylons while stick handling
- When they reach the pylon they will come to a stop and then proceed to the next pylons
- After they have stopped at the last pylon they will skate toward the goal and try to score
- Emphasize the stick handling aspect of this drill

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Quick feet off the start
- Full stops using both feet
- Control the puck
- Head up
- Proper hockey stance

PROGRESSION

- After players take their first shot they wait in front of the net for a pass from their line. After they receive the pass they shoot on net.

GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or

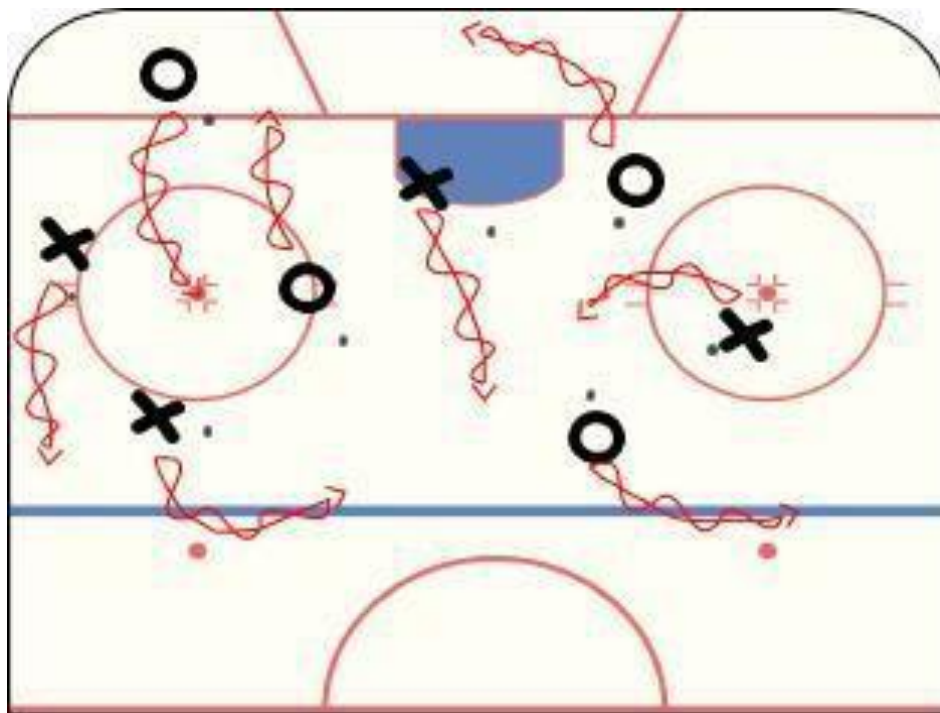


use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 18 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

PUCK CONTROL 4 – SMALL AREA GAMES – KING OF THE COURT



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Each player has a puck and skates around freely
- Players try to maintain control of their puck while also trying to make other players lose their puck
- If you lose your puck you are eliminated from the game
- Last player left wins

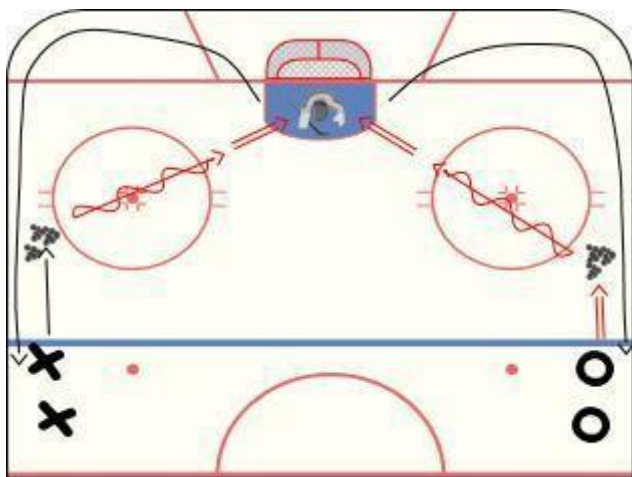
PROGRESSION

- Players that lose their puck remain in the game as defenders
- Defenders must flip their stick upside down



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 19 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

SHOOTING 4 – PUCK PICK UP AND SHOOT (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Practice the skill of picking up a loose puck and skating in for a shot.

ORGANIZATION

- Pucks will be placed by the boards on either wing
- Players will be in two lines
- Players will take turns skating to the pucks and picking one up, then skating to the net to take a shot
- Players should practice picking up pucks on both their forehand and backhand

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Skate at a pace that is comfortable for you to pick up the puck
- Control the puck
- Keep your head up once you have the puck

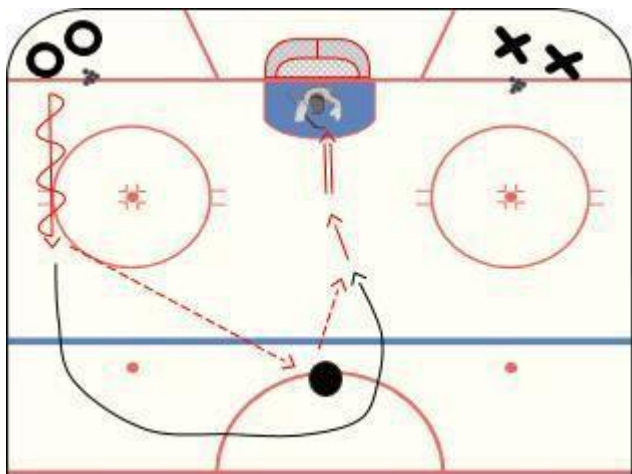
PROGRESSION

- Backhand shots only
- Add an obstacle for players to skate around after picking up the puck

GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets

SHOOTING 4 – COACH CURL (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Practice passing, puck retrieval, offsides and quick-release shots. Be sure to review what offsides are and how to stay onside.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will be in corners with pucks
- Coach will be just outside blue line in neutral zone
- Players skate with the puck and make a pass to the Coach
- Players then curl behind coach and look to receive pass while also staying onside
- When they receive the pass they go in for a shot and rejoin the line

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Puck control while skating
- Staying onside, timing zone entry correctly
- Pass reception

PROGRESSION

- Add a second shot. Player from their line passes them the puck in the slot.



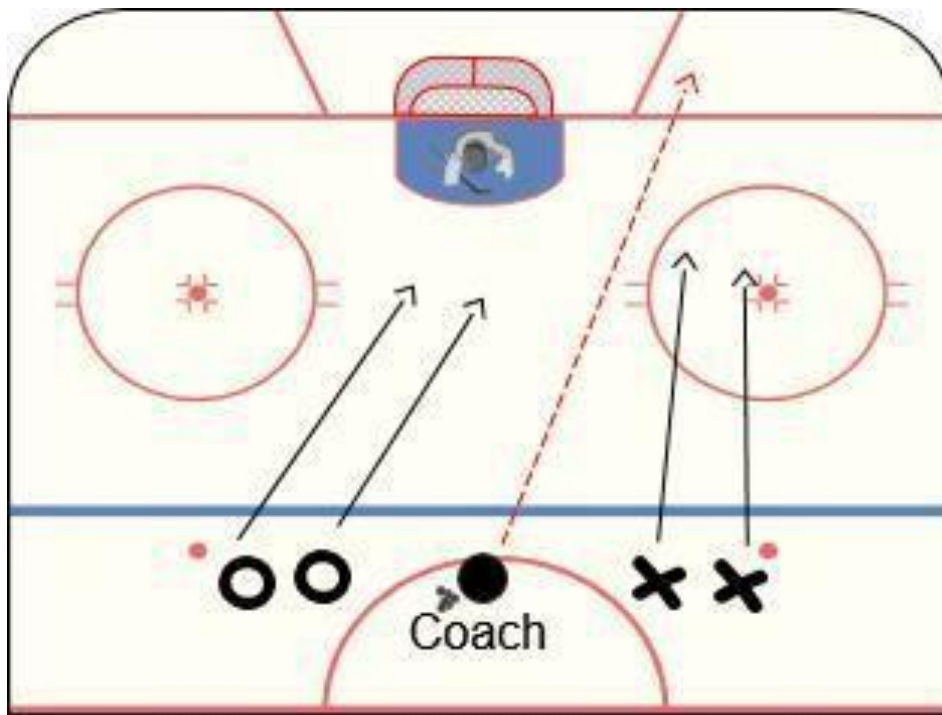
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 19 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

SHOOTING – SMALL AREA GAMES – 2 ON 2 WITH CLEAROUT



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game. Review offside rule.

ORGANIZATION

- Players will be on teams of 2
- Coach will dump puck in
- Teams will skate in and battle for possession of the puck
- The team with the puck must pass to the coach and clear the zone to be onside
- Once they clear the zone they will get a pass from the coach and can go on the offensive
- Defending team can steal the puck and pass to coach, clear the zone and go on offense
- After each goal or a certain period of time has passed, switch teams

PROGRESSION

- Add a third player to each team to make it a 3 on 3

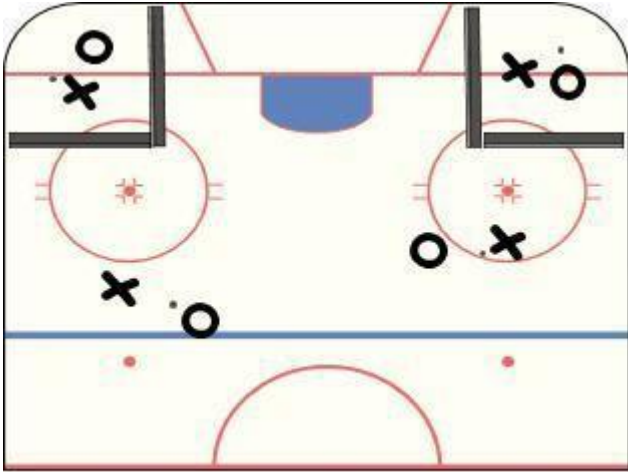
GOALIE

- If there are extra goalies have one in the net
- If there aren't extra goalies, alternate the net in some way (turn the net around to face the boards, lay net facedown etc), add obstacles to make it more difficult to score, or use mini nets



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 20 OF 20 (FIRST PERIOD)

CHECKING 4 – 1 ON 1 PUCK PROTECTION (PART 1 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Explain and demonstrate puck protection techniques. Explain when these skills should be used

ORGANIZATION

- Players will be in pairs with one puck
- Using a designated space (mark it however you can) they will take turns protecting the puck and being the checker
- Players are encouraged to move around and be creative

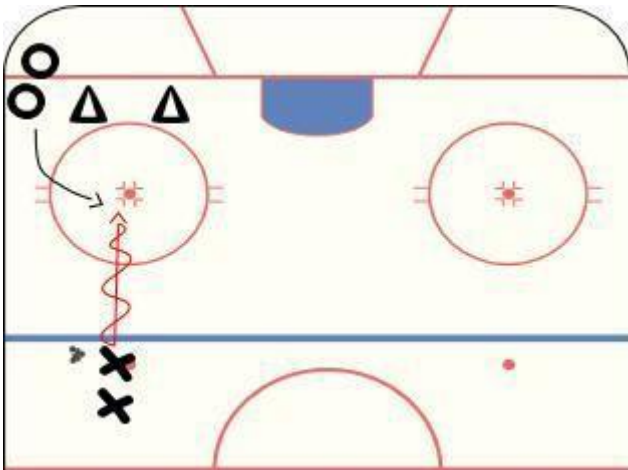
KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Body positioning
- Low center of gravity (proper hockey stance)
- Keep puck away from body
- Keep feet moving

PROGRESSION

- Use smaller or bigger designated area
- Add a shot on goal after

CHECKING 4 – OPEN ICE CHECKING (PART 2 OF 2)



OBJECTIVE

Explain how to properly execute a check in open ice (**NOT** a body-check). Explain the concept of shadowing another player.

ORGANIZATION

- Two lines of players
- One line has puck and the other does not
- The player with a puck tries to skate through a pair of pylons place in open ice
- The player without a puck tries to execute a check in open ice in an attempt to knock the puck away

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Angling
- Timing
- Speed match
- Body positioning
- Shadowing

PROGRESSION

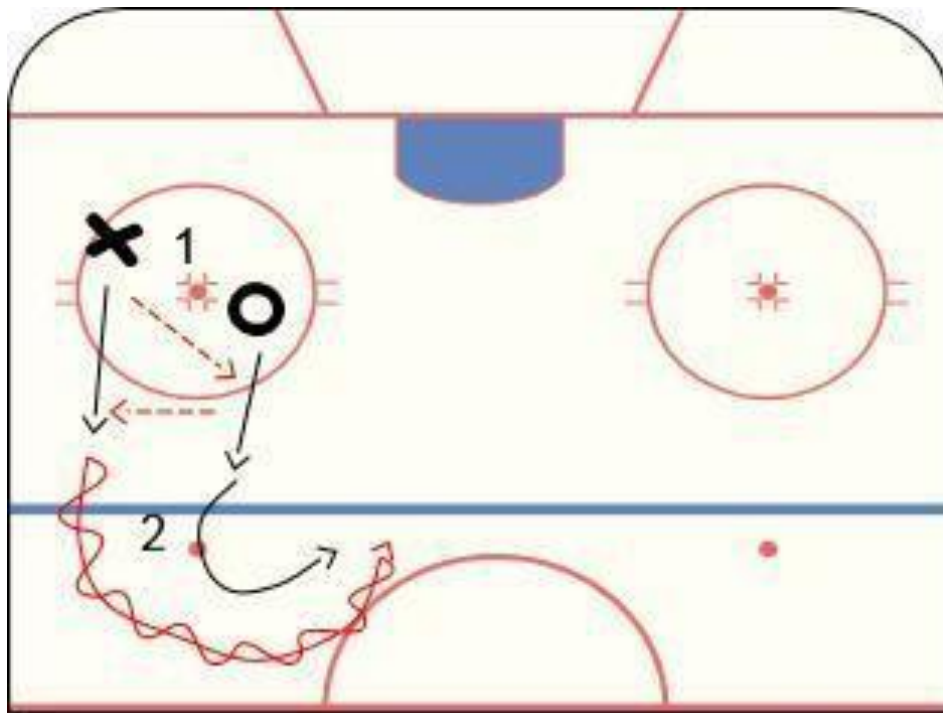


-
- Both players can start from the corner
 - One player designated as the puck carrier, the other as the checker
 - The puck carrier will proceed to the blueline where all the pucks are and pick one up
 - Meanwhile the checker shadows from a distance
 - Once the puck carrier has the puck the checker attempts to make a check in open ice and knock the puck away



U9 DEVELOPMENT ZONE – GAME 20 OF 20 (SECOND PERIOD)

CHECKING 4 – SMALL AREA GAMES – FOX AND THE HOUND



OBJECTIVE

Review the skills you learned in the previous drills and explain how they are used during this game.

ORGANIZATION

- Players are in pairs
- They pass the puck between each other while skating around freely
- When the Coach says “go” the player without the puck checks the puck carrier
- The player with the puck tries to protect the puck
- After a short time the coach will say “stop” and they will resume passing between each other
- Repeat

PROGRESSION

- Pairs must stay within a confined area such as the faceoff circles
- When Coach says “stop” everyone finds a new partner

