

Field Hockey

Field hockey, or simply **hockey**, is a team sport of the [hockey](#) family. The earliest origins of the sport date back to the Middle Ages in England, Scotland and the Netherlands.^[1] The game can be played on a grass field or a turf field as well as an indoor board surface. Each team plays with eleven players including the goalie. Players use sticks made out of wood or fiber glass to hit a round, hard, rubber like ball. The length of the stick depends on the player's individual height.^[2] There are left hand sticks in field hockey, but only one side of the stick is allowed to be used. Goalies have a different kind of stick. Theirs has another curve on the end of the stick. The uniform consists of shin-guards, cleats, skirts (usually referred to as kilts) or shorts, a mouth guard and a jersey. At the turn of the 21st century, the game is played globally, with particular popularity throughout western Europe, the Indian subcontinent, and Australasia as well as the American South and Northeast (such as Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania) as well as Southern Africa. Hockey is the national sport of [Pakistan](#), and is sometimes assumed to be [India](#)'s national sport as well, although officially [India](#) does not have a national sport.^[3] The term "field hockey" is used primarily in [Canada](#) and the [United States](#) where [ice hockey](#) is more popular.

During play, goal keepers are the only players who are allowed to touch the ball with any part of their body (the player's hand is considered 'part of the stick'), with this only applying within the *shooting circle* (also known as the *D*, or *shooting arc*, or just the circle), while field players play the ball with the flat side of their stick. The team that scores the most [goals](#) by the end of the match wins. If the score is tied at the end of the game, either a [draw](#) is declared or the game goes into extra time and/or a penalty shootout, depending on the competition's format. The governing body of hockey is the [International Hockey Federation \(IHF\)](#), with men and women being represented internationally in competitions including the [Olympic Games](#), [World Cup](#), [World League](#), [Champions Trophy](#) and [Junior World Cup](#), with many countries running extensive junior, senior, and masters' club competitions. The FIH is also responsible for organising the [Hockey Rules Board](#) and developing the [rules](#) for the sport.

A popular variant of field hockey is [indoor field hockey](#), which differs in a number of respects while embodying the primary principles of hockey. Indoor hockey is a 5-a-side variant, with a field which is reduced to approximately 40 m × 20 m (131 ft × 66 ft). With many of the rules remaining the same, including obstruction and feet, there are several key variations – Players may not raise the ball unless shooting on goal, players may not hit the ball (instead utilising pushes to transfer the ball), and the sidelines are replaced with solid barriers which the ball will rebound off

Field of play

Diagram of a hockey field

Most hockey field dimensions were originally fixed using whole numbers of [imperial measures](#). Nevertheless, metric measurements are now the official dimensions as laid down by the [International Hockey Federation](#) (FIH) in the "Rules of Hockey". The pitch is a 91.4 m × 55 m (100.0 yd × 60.1 yd) rectangular field. At each end is a goal 2.14 m (7 ft) high and 3.66 m (12 ft) wide, as well as lines across the field 22.90 m (25 yd) from each end-line (generally referred to as the 23-metre lines or the 25-yard lines) and in the center of the field. A spot 0.15 m (6 in) in diameter, called the penalty spot or stroke mark, is placed with its centre 6.40 m (7 yd) from the centre of each goal. The shooting circle is 15 m (16 yd) from the base line.

Playing Surface

Historically the game developed on natural grass turf. In the early 1970s, "[synthetic grass](#)" fields began to be used for hockey, with the first Olympic Games on this surface being held at the [1976 Montreal edition](#). Synthetic pitches are now mandatory for all international tournaments and for most national competitions. While hockey is still played on traditional grass fields at some local levels and lesser national divisions, it has been replaced by synthetic surfaces almost everywhere in the western world. There are three main types of artificial hockey surface:^{[14][15][16]}

- Unfilled or water-based - artificial fibres that are densely packed for stabilisation, requires irrigation or watering to avoid pitch wear

- Dressed or sand-dressed - artificial fibres can be less densely packed and sand supports the fibres for part of the [pile depth](#)
- Filled or sand-filled - artificial fibres can be longer and less densely packed and sand supports the fibres for 100% of the pile depth

Since the 1970s, sand-based pitches have been favoured as they dramatically speed up the game. However, in recent years there has been a massive increase in the number of "water-based" artificial turfs. Water-based synthetic turfs enable the ball to be transferred more quickly than on sand-based surfaces. It is this characteristic that has made them the surface of choice for international and national league competitions. Water-based surfaces are also less abrasive than sand-based surfaces and reduce the level of injury to players when they come into contact with the surface. The FIH are now [when?](#) proposing that new surfaces being laid should be of a hybrid variety which require less watering. This is due to the negative ecological effects of the high water requirements of water-based synthetic fields. It has also been stated that the decision to make artificial surfaces mandatory greatly favoured more affluent countries who could afford these new pitches.^[17]

Rules and play

The game is played between two teams of whom eleven are permitted to be on the pitch at any one time. The remaining players may be substituted in any combination. There is an unlimited amount of times a team can sub in and out. Substitutions are permitted at any point in the game, apart from between the award and end of a penalty corner; two exceptions to this rule is for injury or suspension of the defending goalkeeper, which is not allowed when playing with a field keep, or a player can exit the field, but you must wait until after the inserter touches the ball to put somebody back in.

Players are permitted to play the ball with the flat of the 'face side' and with the edges of the head and handle of the field hockey stick with the exception that, for reasons of safety, the ball may not be struck 'hard' with a forehand edge stroke, because of the difficulty of controlling the height and direction of the ball from that stroke.

The flat side is always on the "natural" side for a right-handed person swinging the stick at the ball from right to left. Left-handed sticks are rare, but available; however they are pointless as the rules forbid their use in a game. To make a strike at the ball with a left to right swing the

player must present the flat of the 'face' of the stick to the ball by 'reversing' the stick head, i.e. by turning the handle through approximately 180° (while a reverse edge hit would turn the stick head through approximately 90° from the position of an upright forehand stroke with the 'face' of the stick head).

Edge hitting of the ball underwent a two-year "experimental period", twice the usual length of an "experimental trial" and is still a matter of some controversy within the sport. Ric Charlesworth, the former Australian coach, has been a strong critic of the unrestricted use of the reverse edge hit. The 'hard' forehand edge hit was banned after similar concerns were expressed about the ability of players to direct the ball accurately, but the reverse edge hit does appear to be more predictable and controllable than its counterpart.

Other rules include; no foot to ball contact, no use of hands, no obstructing other players, no high back swing, and no third party. If a player is dribbling the ball and either loses control and kicks the ball or another player interferes that player is not permitted to gain control and continue dribbling. The rules do not allow the person who kicked the ball to gain advantage from the kick, so the ball will automatically be passed on to the opposing team. Conversely, if no advantage is gained from kicking the ball, play should continue. Players may not obstruct another's chance of hitting the ball in any way. No shoving/using your body/stick to prevent advancement in the other team. Penalty for this is the opposing team receives the ball and if the problem continues, the player can be carded. While a player is taking a free hit or starting a corner the back swing of their hit cannot be too high for this is considered dangerous. Finally there may not be three players touching the ball at one time. Two players from opposing teams can battle for the ball, however if another player interferes it is considered third party and the ball automatically goes to the team who only had one player involved in the third party.

Positions

A [Virginia Cavaliers](#) field player passing the ball
" hockey positions are discussed, notions of fluidity are very common. Each team can be fielded with a maximum of 11 players and will typically arrange themselves into forwards, midfielders, and defensive

players (fullbacks) with players frequently moving between these lines with the flow of play. Each team may also play with:"

** a goalkeeper who wears a different color shirt and full protective equipment comprising at least headgear, leg guards and kickers; this player is referred to in the rules as a goalkeeper; or*

** a field player with goalkeeping privileges wearing a different color shirt and who may wear protective headgear (but not leg guards and kickers or other goalkeeping protective equipment) when inside their defending 23m area; they must wear protective headgear when defending a penalty corner or stroke; this player is referred to in the rules as a player with goalkeeping privileges; or*

** Only field players; no player has goalkeeping privileges or wears a different color shirt; no player may wear protective headgear except a face mask when defending a penalty corner or stroke.^[4]*

Formations

As hockey has a very dynamic style of play, it is difficult to simplify positions to the static [formations](#) which are common in [association football](#). Although positions will typically be categorized as either fullback, halfback, midfield/inner or striker, it is important for players to have an understanding of every position on the field. For example, it is not uncommon to see a halfback overlap and end up in either attacking position, with the midfield and strikers being responsible for re-adjusting to fill the space they left. Movement between lines like this is particularly common across all positions.

This fluid Australian culture of hockey has been responsible for developing an international trend towards players occupying spaces on the field, not having assigned positions. Although they may have particular spaces on the field which they are more comfortable and effective as players, they are responsible for occupying the space nearest them. This fluid approach to hockey and player movement, has made it easy for teams to transition between formations such as; "3 at the back", "2 centre halves", "5 at the back" and more.

Goal keepers

When the ball is inside the circle they are defending and they have their stick in their hand, goalkeepers wearing full protective equipment are permitted to use their stick, feet, kickers or leg guards to propel the ball and to use their stick, feet, kickers, leg guards or any other part of their

body to stop the ball or deflect it in any direction including over the back-line. Similarly, field players are permitted to use their stick. They are not allowed to use their feet and legs to propel the ball, stop the ball or deflect it in any direction including over the back-line. However, neither goalkeepers, or players with goalkeeping privileges are permitted to conduct themselves in a manner which is dangerous to other players by taking advantage of the protective equipment they wear.^[4]

Neither goalkeepers or players with goalkeeping privileges may lie on the ball, however, they are permitted to use arms, hands and any other part of their body to push the ball away. Lying on the ball deliberately will result into a penalty stroke, whereas if an umpire deems a goalkeeper has lay on the ball accidentally (e.g. it gets stuck in their protective equipment), a penalty corner is awarded.

** The action above is permitted only as part of a goal saving action or to move the ball away from the possibility of a goal scoring action by opponents. It does not permit a goalkeeper or player with goalkeeping privileges to propel the ball forcefully with arms, hands or body so that it travels a long distance*

When the ball is outside the circle they are defending, goalkeepers or players with goalkeeping privileges are only permitted to play the ball with their stick. Further, a goalkeeper, or player with goalkeeping privileges whom is wearing a helmet must not take part in the match outside the 23m area they are defending, except when taking a penalty stroke. A goalkeeper must wear protective headgear at all times, except when taking a penalty stroke.

General play

For the purposes of the rules, all players on the team in possession of the ball are attackers, and those on the team without the ball are defenders, yet throughout the game being played you are always "defending" your goal and "attacking" the opposite goal.^[18]

Sideline hit in a match Standard Athletic Club vs. British School of Paris (1996)

The match is officiated by two field [umpires](#). Traditionally each umpire generally controls half of the field, divided roughly diagonally. These

umpires are often assisted by a technical bench including a timekeeper and record keeper.

Prior to the start of the game, a coin is tossed and the winning captain can choose a starting end or whether to start with the ball. The game consists of two halves of 35 minutes with a 5-minute break at half time before changing ends. At the start of each period, as well as after goals are scored, play is started with a pass from the centre of the field. All players must start in their defensive half (apart from the player making the pass), but the ball may be played in any direction along the floor. Each team starts with the ball in one half, and the team that conceded the goal has possession for the restart. Teams trade sides at halftime. Field players may only play the ball with the face of the stick. If the back side of the stick is used, it is a penalty and the other team will get the ball back. Tackling is permitted as long as the tackler does not make contact with the attacker or his stick before playing the ball (contact after the tackle may also be penalised if the tackle was made from a position where contact was inevitable). Further, the player with the ball may not deliberately use his body to push a defender out of the way. Field players may not play the ball with their feet, but if the ball accidentally hits the feet, and the player gains no benefit from the contact, then the contact is not penalised. Although there has been a change in the wording of this rule from 1 January 2007, the current FIH umpires' briefing instructs umpires not to change the way they interpret this rule.^[19]

Obstruction typically occurs in three circumstances – when a defender comes between the player with possession and the ball in order to prevent them tackling; when a defender's stick comes between the attacker's stick and the ball or makes contact with the attacker's stick or body; and also when blocking the opposition's attempt to tackle a teammate with the ball (called *third party obstruction*).

When the ball passes completely over the sidelines (on the sideline is still in), it is returned to play with a sideline hit, taken by a member of the team whose players were not the last to touch the ball before crossing the sideline. The ball must be placed on the sideline, with the hit taken from as near the place the ball went out of play as possible. If it crosses the back line after last touched by an attacker, a 15 m (16 yd) hit. A 15 m hit is also awarded for offenses committed by the attacking side within 15 m of the end of the pitch they are attacking.

Set plays

Set plays are often utilized for specific situations such as a penalty corner or free hit. For instance, many teams have penalty corner variations that they can use to beat the defensive team. The coach may have plays that sends the ball between two defenders and let the player attack the opposing teams goal. There are no set plays unless your team has them.

Free hits

Free hits are awarded when offences are committed outside the scoring circles (the term 'free hit' is standard usage but the ball need not be hit). The ball may be hit, pushed or lifted in any direction by the team offended against. The ball can be lifted from a free hit but not by hitting, you must flick or scoop to lift from a free hit. (In previous rules versions hits in the area outside the circle in open play have been permitted but lifting one direction from a free hit prohibited). Opponents must move 5 m (5.5 yd) from the ball when a free hit is awarded. A free hit must be taken from within playing distance of the place of the offence for which it was awarded and the ball must be stationary when the free-hit is taken.

As mentioned above, a 15 m hit is awarded if an attacking player commits a foul forward of that line, or if the ball passes over the back line off an attacker. These free hits are taken in line with where the foul was committed (taking a line parallel with the sideline between where the offence was committed, or the ball went out of play). When an attacking free hit is awarded within 5 m of the circle everyone including the person taking the penalty must be five metres from the circle and everyone apart from the person taking the free hit must be five metres away from the ball. When taking an attacking free hit the ball may not be hit straight into the circle if you are within your attacking 23 metre area (25 yard area). It must travel 5 metres before going in.

2009 experimental changes

In February 2009 the FIH introduced, as a "Mandatory Experiment" for international competition, an updated version of free hit rule. The changes allows a player taking a free hit to pass the ball to themselves. Importantly, this is not a "play on" situation, but to the untrained eye it may appear to be. The player must play the ball any distance in two separate motions, before continuing as if it were a play-on situation.

They may raise an aerial or overhead immediately as the second action, or any other stroke permitted by the rules of field hockey. At the high school level, this is called a self-pass and was adopted in Pennsylvania in 2010 as a legal technique for putting the ball in play.

Also, all players (from both teams) must be at least 5 m from any free hit awarded to the attack within the 23 m area. Additionally, no free hits to the attack are permitted within 5m of the circle, so if a free hit is awarded inside this area it must be dragged back outside this zone. The ball may not travel directly into the circle from a free hit to the attack within the 23 m area without first being touched by another player or being dribbled at least 5 m by a player making a "self-pass". These experimental rules apply to all free hit situations, including sideline and corner hits. National Associations may also choose to introduce these rules for their domestic competitions.

Corner

A corner is awarded if the ball goes over the back line after last being touched by a defender, provided they do not play it over the back line deliberately, in which case a penalty corner is awarded. Corners are played by the attacking team and involve a free hit on the sideline 5 m from the corner of the field closest to where the ball went out of play, this rule, however, was changed in 2015. The ball is taken up to the 23 metre line, in line with where it went out, the rest of the rules for a long corner stayed the same. These restarts are also known as long corners (as opposed to short corner which is an alternative name for the penalty corner). The defense must wait until the offender passes the ball in. The offender has to pull the ball out of the circle before trying to make a goal.

Penalty corner

The [short or penalty corner](#) is awarded:

A group of five defenders, including the goalkeeper, prepare on the back line for a short corner.

- 1 for an offence by a defender in the circle which does not prevent the probable scoring of a goal

- 2 for an intentional offence in the circle by a defender against an opponent who does not have possession of the ball or an opportunity to play the ball
- 3 for an intentional offence by a defender outside the circle but within the 23-metre area they are defending
- 4 for intentionally playing the ball over the back-line by a defender
- 5 when the ball becomes lodged in a player's clothing or equipment while in the circle they are defending

Short corners begin with five defenders (usually including the keeper) positioned behind the back line and at least 10 yards from the nearest goal post.^[20] All other players in the defending team must be beyond the centre line, that is not in their 'own' half of the pitch, until the ball is in play. Attacking players begin the play standing outside the scoring circle, except for one attacker who starts the corner by playing the ball from a mark 10 m either side of the goal (the circle has a 14.63 m radius). This player puts the ball into play by pushing or hitting the ball to the other attackers outside the circle; the ball must pass outside the circle and then put back into the circle before the attackers may make a shot at the goal from which a goal can be scored. FIH rules do not forbid a shot at goal before the ball leaves the circle after being 'inserted', nor is a shot at the goal from outside the circle prohibited, but a goal cannot be scored at all if the ball has not gone out of the circle and cannot be scored from a shot from outside the circle if it is not again played by an attacking player before it enters the goal.

For safety reasons, the first shot of a penalty corner must not exceed 460 mm high (the height of the "backboard" of the goal) at the point it crosses the goal line if it is hit. However, if the ball is deemed to be below backboard height, the ball can be subsequently deflected above this height by another player (defender or attacker), providing that this deflection does not lead to danger. Note that the "Slap" stroke (a sweeping motion towards the ball, where the stick is kept on or close to the ground when striking the ball) is classed as a hit, and so the first shot at goal must be below backboard height for this type of shot also. If the first shot at goal in a short corner situation is a push, flick or scoop, in particular the *drag flick* (which has become popular at international and national league standards), the shot is permitted to rise above the height of the backboard, as long as the shot is not deemed dangerous to any opponent. This form of shooting was developed because it is not height restricted in the same way as the first hit shot at

the goal and players with good technique are able to drag-flick with as much power as many others can hit a ball.

Penalty stroke

Main article: [Penalty stroke](#)

A [penalty stroke](#) is awarded when a defender commits a foul in the circle (accidental or otherwise) that prevents a probable goal or commits a deliberate foul in the circle or if defenders repeatedly run from the back line too early at a penalty corner. The penalty stroke is taken by a single attacker in the circle, against the goalkeeper, from a spot 6.4 m from goal. The ball is played only once at goal by the attacker using a push, flick or scoop stroke. If the shot is saved, play is restarted with a 15 m hit to the defenders. When a goal is scored, play is restarted in the normal way.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field_hockey