

GOLDEN RULES FOR FORWARDS

(LPH annually)

These Golden Rules are the key items players should be striving to master as they progress up through the ranks to high school and college. The best players at the highest levels of hockey follow most of the Golden Rules *most* often. A player of average skills and speed will do very well if these rules are mastered. While the rules are basic and seem obvious, it may take many years of concentrated effort for most players to automatically perform them properly. This automatic reaction is what coaches should be teaching and players working toward.

1. Know what your job is -- in all three zones -- and do it each time. Don't try to do teammates' jobs or you will fail at your own. Ask questions in practice if you are unsure about any situations during play or faceoffs. Intelligent hockey is what wins games.

2. Backcheck at full speed until you have someone covered when coming back to your zone. Backchecking at full speed is simply the complement of attacking at full speed. Don't be a one direction player.

3. When backchecking, pick up the most open man *without* the puck. If the puck is in your area, it may well be appropriate to go after the puck carrier. However, the player without the puck is often most dangerous. Often it is most effective to let the defenseman take the puck carrier and to take away the pass by covering the other open forward.

4. Put out a full and honest effort on each shift then get off the ice. Maximum effort, short shifts have proven to be most desirable at all levels of hockey.

5. Push the puck into the offensive zone or get a whistle when you or anyone on your line is tired. A tired line is most vulnerable -- it is seldom productive to play tired. It's always desirable to take a whistle in the defensive zone than to defend it "without legs."

6. Always *attack* with the puck. Do not make it easy for the other team to catch you from behind. A pressured attack is much harder for a defenseman to cover and results in more 2-on-1 and 3-on-2 situations.

7. Move the puck up the ice with passes to linemates ahead that are open, then move quickly to join the rush. Don't force passes to covered linemates ahead. Skating the puck up the ice is the slowest alternative.

8. Get into the habit of shooting when in the slot area unless an obvious open pass is available. It is seldom productive to stickhandle further once in the slot unless to gain a better angle on the goaltender or to let linemates move in for rebounding. Extra passes look good but often take away good scoring chances. The key offensive strategy of hockey is to get shots from the slot. When they are available, they should be taken.

9. Always use a wrist or snap shot when shooting from the slot. Quickness and accuracy score from the slot; slap shots do not provide either.

10. Move *away* from the net when a teammate has the puck behind the opposition goal line or wide and deep on the boards, and move toward the net when your defense or high forward has the puck in a shooting position. It is easier to remember "move out when the puck is inside and move in when the puck is outside." The tendency is to move up close to the net when a teammate has the puck in the corner or behind the net. However, up close is where most of the congestion and close coverage is. A high slot position will result in more opportunities for clear shots. When a defenseman is in a shooting position, on the other hand, moving to the net creates the best screening of the goaltender and also puts players around the net for rebounds. There are some details to be worked out by individual coaches, but the basic concept is important.

11. Take *specific* care not to go offside when attacking in an advantage situation (2-on-1 or 3-on-2). While it is seldom good to be offside, it is critical to complete 2-on-1 or 3-on-2 situations as many times as possible in each game. It is best to be conservative going over the blue line in these situations.

12. When throwing the puck into the zone, shoot it to the opposite corner or off the end boards where it will come out at a difficult angle for both the goaltender and defensemen to handle. Shooting the puck at the goaltender or around the boards gives control to the opposing goaltender -- who can easily feed a defenseman or wing.

13. Don't "tie up" with an opposing player when your team is short handed. The odds of scoring get better as fewer players are involved in a power play situation, i.e: 4-on-3 is better than 5-on-4.

14. Don't retaliate from checks or infractions, whether legal or not. Part of the forward's job is to take checks and keep playing. Retaliation often results in a penalty and referees often miss the opposing player's infraction.

15. Communicate with your linemates and other teammates. It is one of the most important parts of teamwork. Don't *ever* communicate with opposing players -- it seldom is of value and exposes your emotions.

16. Constantly practice your weakest skills. Get away from the habit of just shooting when you have free time in practice. Other skills are more important.

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1. Always back your partner -- on the offensive blue line, in the neutral zone, and especially in the defensive zone.
2. Always one defenseman in front of the net when the opposition has the puck in your zone or there is danger that they may gain possession. For young defensemen (Mites through early Pee Wees) the rule should *always* be one defenseman in front of the net when the puck is in your zone.
3. Do not leave the offensive zone too soon. Leaving too soon is a much more common mistake than leaving too late for a large percentage of defensemen from Mites through high school. It backs the defense up too fast and too far and makes "pacing" the attacking forward much harder.
4. Always play defense first. If attacking with the puck, only go deep into offensive zone until *prime* scoring opportunity is over --and you are part of it.
5. Never play a 1-on-1 head on. Give the attacker a little room on one side to force him to go where *you* want him to go.

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7. Shoot intelligently from the point. The best shot is always low, generally not too hard, (so it stays in the scoring area for rebounds), and accurate. Defensemen seldom are shooting to score, but rather to put the puck into scoring area so that forwards can score. Always look up so shots are not into opposing players and so that passes to wide wings or partner can be made when appropriate.

8. Do not "tie up" with people in front of your net -- rather gain position and control.

9. Do not ever "tie up" with an opposing player *anywhere* when your team is a man short. As the players on the team with a penalty tie up and are out of the play, the odds get better on the power play, ie: 4-on-3 is better than 5-on-4, 3-on-2 is better than 4-on-3, etc.

10. Do not stand looking for someone to pass to, especially in the defensive zone. Look -- move -- look -- pass. This reduces the chances of being surprised from the back or side, makes the pass more accurate, and forces the opposition to begin retreating.

11. When turning with a player breaking around the outside, keep the feet moving -- do not lunge or reach without moving feet. Young players have an especially hard time with this, mainly because of their lack of skating and turning skills.

12. Work, work, work on backward skating and turning. A defenseman must be as comfortable going backwards and sideways as forwards. Young players all the way through college must continue to practice these skills as their bodies grow and change.

13. Do not pass to covered forwards -- carry it, cross-pass to partner, or "eat it" if necessary. Defensemen must gain confidence in cross-passing and in carrying the puck to open up the attack, allowing their forwards to get open. Feeding the opposition's point has been a weakness at all levels since day one.

14. Check only for purpose. Checking just for the sake of a hit is seldom of value and creates risk of self injury, missed checks -- and open opposition players, as well as penalties. There are many situations in games when checking is appropriate and necessary. Learn to check for these situations.

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16. Follow your attacking forwards closely (20 to 30 feet) and move quickly into offensive zone after puck goes into the zone. Many defensemen are lazy moving up the ice and allow the puck to turn around before they get over the blue line.

17. The blue lines are critical. Always clear the puck over the defensive blue line as a first priority -- then move up to blue line quickly. Defend both blue lines with as much vigor as is reasonable as the opposition attacks down the ice -- they are the natural points to stop the attack.

6-1 GOLDEN RULES FOR GOALTENDERS

(1993-94 LPH #11)

My Golden Rules for defensemen and for forwards were evolved many years ago, although each gets some fine tuning occasionally. It is appropriate, after getting a hard time from a number of goaltenders and coaches over the years, to finally produce a Golden Rules for Goaltenders list. It is interesting to note that several of the rules are the same or similar to those for defensemen and forwards.

These are the items that coaches should be using to teach goaltenders -- and to monitor their progress. They are the things that players should be striving to master as they progress up through the youth ranks to high school or junior and on to college. Goaltenders that follow these rules most often will generally be the best performers at all levels.

1. Stay alert at all times no matter where the puck is on the ice. Of course, that does not mean you have to be in a crouch all the time, but it does mean that the eyes and mind have to *always* follow the play.

2. Learn the *basic* moves and techniques as soon as possible and work to excel at them. The basic moves and techniques are skate saves, pad stacks, V drops, stick or pad saves with puck control, blocker saves, catcher saves, covering the puck, puck movement with the stick (shooting and clearing), slides and glides, and by all means not last, skating.

3. Understand and work on angles and distances. This is knowing the distance and angle from the goal to take the maximum goal opening away from the shooter. This is a matter of constant practice and monitoring.

4. Learn to analyze each situation, especially when being attacked, then act accordingly. There are innumerable possibilities for situations, but analysis involves understanding the options of the player with

the puck as well as attackers without the puck, plus the level of support available from teammates. I once heard Joe Bertagna, a well known goaltender coach with the Boston Bruins, simply describe this activity as: "looking, thinking, executing."

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8. Learn what it takes for *you* to prepare yourself to play a good game. Find the appropriate process that gets you focused.

9. Learn to *control* the puck whenever possible. That means controlling "shoot-in" pucks behind the net; freezing the puck whenever it's loose around the net; deflecting shots or loose pucks to the corner; getting the puck to teammates; and controlling rebounds.

10. Play with confidence and shake off goals allowed -- to maintain focus on upcoming action. Non-emotional clear thinking is one of the bases of good goaltending.

11. Strive for consistency. The best way to do that is to control emotions and have a good grasp of physical skills.

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