

Transition Practice (Half Ice)



Tuesday, January 23rd, 2024

Please Note: The Practice of the Week is usually designed to be utilized across multiple age levels. With that being said, we highly encourage you to adjust the drills based on your team's age and skill levels. These drills and practices can be modified to become more basic or more advanced.

The drills and games in this practice are designed to help your players work on quick transitions. Transition play is typically viewed as full ice events, but there are still concepts that can be practiced within a half sheet of ice.

Focus Points

These themes for the practice come from Topher Scott's video on Winning the Transition:

Themes

1. Starts with Mentality - your team needs to have the mentality to push the pace and play fast when transitioning on offense or back on defense
2. Transition offense comes from good defense - creating turnovers creates opportunities on transition because the other team is not set-up in their defensive structure
3. Anticipation - players should be aware of when the transition is happening and what your mentality should be on both sides of the puck

Offensive Tips

1. Right up fast - as soon as a turnover happens you need to get through the neutral zone fast to attack quickly in transition and catch the defenders off guard
2. Changing sides - if you can get right up fast and get the puck to the other side of the ice it can create more time and space and causes even more confusion for the defenders
3. Anticipation and communication - identifying when a turnover happens or is about to happen will lead to quick strike attacks

Defensive Tips (transitioning to defend)

1. Get back hard through the middle - 3 hard strides to get back
2. Great sticks - lead with your stick on the ice and in lanes when getting back
3. Communication - verbal and non verbal communication is crucial to sort things out when there is chaos with an attacking transition

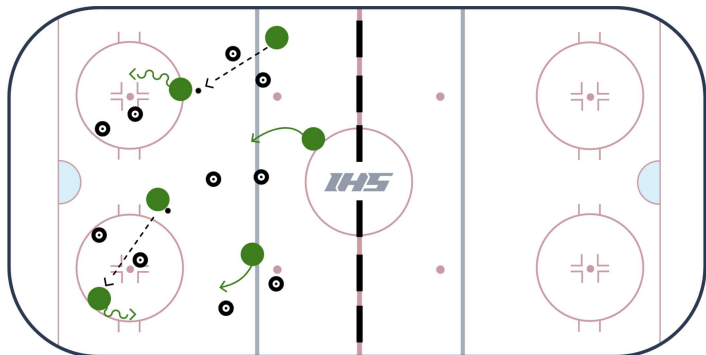
Gates of Buffalo Small Area Passing Game

Details:

The major concept of the Gates of Buffalo Small Area Hockey Game is to practice moving to open space, communicating verbally and non-verbally with teammates, so they can score Goals by passing through Gates.

This game framework will help players learn to play with their head up, communicate with teammates and move to open space.

As a coach, If you commit to working on activities like this instead of memorization drills for a portion of each practice, you will marvel at how your team begins to work together. It will look extremely messy at first, but players will get better with each repetition. Moving to open space, and moving the puck will eventually become second nature to the team.



GAME OBJECTIVE

- Score as many goals as possible by passing through the "Gates."
- You can not pass through the same gate twice in a row!

SETUP & ACTIVITY VARIABLES

- **Players:** great for 3, 4 or 5 players at a time.
- **Time:** You can rotate through groups of players in 30, 45 or 60 second shifts and count how many goals are scored.
 - Or you can set a number of goals (let's use 5 for example) and stop the watch after 5 goals are completed.
 - 5 players can be participating in the activity, while another 5 rest. Blow the whistle and the next 5 jump in. *It gets fun when the teams compete against each other!*
- **Space:** can be set up to be within a zone, or half of a zone (station) or a smaller area. The smaller the space, the more challenging it will be for the players as they are forced to make quicker decisions.
- **Added Challenge:** add obstacles within the space to challenge the players further.
 - Tires, cones, sticks, defenceman, etc placed in the space will make it harder to pass and skate around. As time goes on the added obstacles will help improve their reaction & decision making.
- **Group Competition:** After the group gets comfortable with the exercises, you can add a natural element of competition between the groups by counting the number of successful goals made in the specified amount of time.
 - Or you can time each group and see how fast they can complete 5 (or any other number) goals. You will marvel at how the natural element of competition between groups will make the game more intense, competitive and fun!
- **With a Goalie:** You can require the players to make 2 (or more) passes through a gate before they can shoot on net. After they shoot on net, they need to make the required number of passes through the gates again.
- **Pucks:** You can add in 2 or more pucks at a time to make players pay more attention to the game and their surroundings.
- **Gates:** You can add 3 or more gates. They can be made of tires, cones, pucks and other materials. Change up the sizes of the gates for an extra challenge. The smaller the gate, the more challenging the game is!
- **3 vs 3 Game:** You can setup gates and make the game 3 v 3, 3 vs 2, or 3 vs 1 so there is another team working to prevent scoring on the gates. Adding additional players for the team to play against will give the game a whole new spin. View a video demo of the 3 vs 3 game setup.

Setup Suggestions for Elite Players

- Make the gates much smaller.
- You can add a hockey stick at the bottom of each gate so players must "sauce" through a gate and over the stick for the point.
- Add various obstacles on the ice such as sticks that players must be aware of and pass around or sauce over.
- For extra fun, add a defenceman. Or play 3 vs 2 or 3 vs 3.
- If you have a goalie, require 2 or more passes through the gates before players are allowed to take a shot on net.

COACHING POINTS

- Encourage players to always move to open space on the ice. Do not allow them to stand still and pass the puck back and forth.
- Encourage players to find "passing lanes" to allow good passes.
 - *This skill is extremely valuable for youth players to work on. Finding passing lanes when you have the puck and jumping to open space when you don't have the puck so your teammate can pass to you is extremely beneficial during games.*
- Encourage verbal communication (calling teammate by name, saying you are open, etc).
- Encourage non-verbal communication (good eye contact, showing a passing target, tapping a stick, etc).
- **Allow players to make mistakes. It will take time to get comfortable with these activities. But as time goes on you will see them picking their head up to make a decision, which is the goal of this small area game.**

Why do we call this small area game "**Gates of Buffalo**?" The game has been called "gates" in the world of soccer and we decided to add Buffalo to it for two fun reasons: First, IHS has strong ties to Buffalo, NY. Secondly, the imagery of a Buffalo can help drive home to your youth players why you are practicing this game. If you do not pick your head up and use your teammates while playing the game of hockey, you run the risk of getting trampled by the other team. This can feel like getting run over by a Buffalo (physically or on the scoreboard). This game helps prevent both of those situations by forcing players to keep their head up while communicating and working with teammates to score goals.

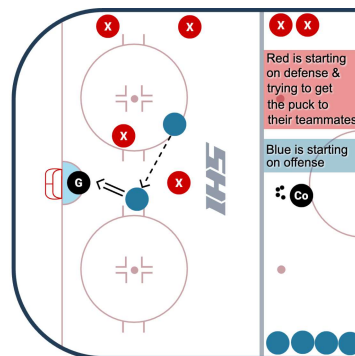
Nobles 2 v 2 Transition Game

Details:

The Nobles 2 V 2 Transition Game practices quick transitions & offensive attack principles.

Setup

- Inside the zone, start a 2 v 2 game.
- The defending team has 2 players along the boards.
- The offensive team is trying to score, while the defending team is trying to get the puck to their teammates on the boards.
- When the defending team gets possession of the puck and passes to their teammates on the boards, the players on the boards transition to offense, and the players that were previously playing offense in the 2 v 2 transition to defense.
- The game is continuous, the offensive team is trying to score, while the defending team is trying to get the puck to their teammates on the boards.



Coaching Points

- Offensive Players:
 - Practice quick transitions
 - Get to the net
 - Utilize switches and exchanges with your teammates
 - Practice quick release catch and release shots
- Defensive Players:
 - Keep puck to the outside
 - Keep stick on the ice to block passing and shooting lanes
 - Transition the puck quickly to your teammates on the boards when you gain possession

Variations

Can play Nobles 2 v 2 + 2 Teammates Transition Game which keeps the players on the boards active which will make the games a 4 v 2.

1 v 1, to 2 v 2 to 3 v 3

Details:

Description

This quick paced small area game from Kendall Coyne Schofield gets a lot of players moving and is great to work on goal scoring when there is back pressure.

Set Up

- Set up 2 nets on the half wall in one of the zones
- A goalie is defending each net
- Team "X" and Team "O" should be lined up on the blue line on one side
- Make sure there is at least a 10 ft space between the teams on the blue line
- There should be pucks lined up for each team near the center of the blue line

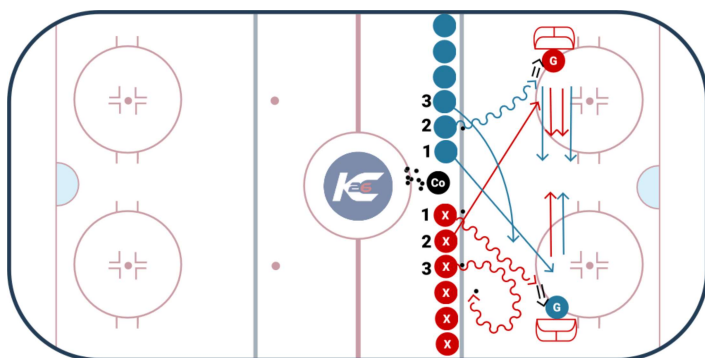
Game

Play up to a certain amount of goals, team "X" vs team "O"

- On the whistle, player 1 from team O skates in on a mini breakaway
- Player 1 from team X leaves on the same whistle to apply back pressure on the player from team O
- On the second whistle player 2 from team X skates in on a mini breakaway while player 2 from team O applies the back pressure
- On that same second whistle, player 1 from both team X and team O join the rush to make it a 2 v 2
- On the third whistle player 3 from team O skates in on a mini breakaway while player 3 from team X applies the back pressure
- On that same third whistle, players 1 and 2 from both teams join the rush to make it a 3 v 3
- Coach can blow the whistle whenever they see fit
- Make sure the team who starts with the puck switches after every rep to keep it fair
- Keep score!

Coaching Points

1. Scoring Under Pressure - players need to control the puck and get to the net and shoot quickly
2. Escaping Pressure - when your teammates join the rush you can make the decision to escape pressure and find the players joining the rush
3. Applying Pressure - working hard to apply pressure to your opponents trying to score



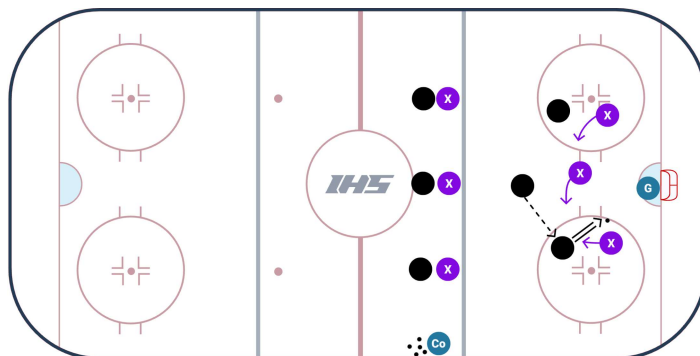
Oreo

Details:

Oreo 3 V 3 Game from Jason Lammers is a continuous game that is competitive in nature as it forces the defense to work to pass the puck to the next players in line, while the offensive team is trying to score.

Setup

- In this example, 3 players line up on the blue line. The players behind them are on the opposite team.
- On the whistle, coach dumps a puck into the zone to begin a 3 on 3.
- The offensive team is trying to score, while the defensive team is trying to pass the puck to the next players in line.
- When the defensive team passes the puck to the next players in line, the team that was previously playing offense, is now on defense, and the players who just got the puck are now on offense.
- The game is continuous, keep score!



Coaching Points

- Offense - support your teammates and be an outlet when you do not have the puck
- Defense - keep sticks on the ice to block passing lanes and angle the offensive team to the outside of the ice
- Everyone - communicate with your teammates

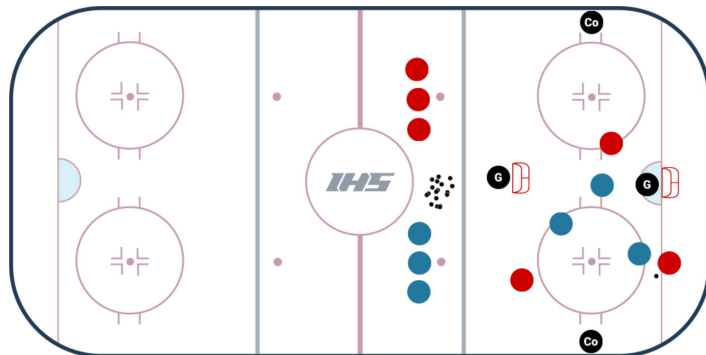
Variations

- Can set this up in different areas of the ice and make it 1/2, 1/3 ice, or 1/4 ice
- Can have this be 1v1, 2v2, 3v3, 4v4, or 5v5
- Can require the defensive team to make a pass to a teammate before they are able to pass to the next players in line

Levels 3 vs 3 Small Area Game

Details:

A fun small area game to keep players, goalies and coaches on their toes! The video clip is of The Buffalo Sabres's playing Levels during their development camp. As time went on and the players got more comfortable with the game, you could tell they absolutely **loved it**. To do well in this game it is important that teams transition quickly, communicate well, create space on offense and takeaway space on defense.



Game Setup

- 2 nets and 2 goalies. 1 net is flipped the other way.
- 3 vs 3 with coaches that act as "bumpers." You can swap the coaches with players to get more players involved.
- For the start of the game, the coach dumps the puck in for 50/50 puck.
- Whichever team gets to the puck and passes to a coach is on offense and is allowed to shoot on both nets. The coach or "bumper" must always pass back to the team that passed them the puck.
- During the game, if the defense gets the puck, they need to transition by passing to a coach first before they can play offense and attack.
- The game presented lots of unique situations and everyone needed to be paying attention.

Please note: Having a net facing the opposite way presents fun, unique opportunities in the game, but it also has the opportunity for players to get hit with shots if someone misses the net. That is one reason why this activity is better for older age groups. If this is a concern for you as a coach, you can keep the exact same rules but flip the nets so they are both facing the "normal" way.

Variations

- You can also swap out the two coaches that are bumpers and use players.
- This can be 2 vs 2 in a smaller area of ice.
- You can flip nets so they are both facing backward or facing the normal way but keep the same rules.
- You can add additional bumpers. Or you can allow all players that are waiting their turn in line to be bumpers so everyone is paying attention and involved!

Related Content

- 14 Benefits of Small Area Hockey Games & 45+ Game Ideas

Additional Transition Resources

Coach's Notes:

- 122+ Transition Drills
- Winning the Transition Webinar by Topher Scott
- U14 Neutral Zone Transitions Practice by Alyssa Gagliardi
- U14 Quick Transitions Practice by Alyssa Gagliardi

IHS Members can create their own practice plans that look like this. Learn how here

Bracket Turns for Hockey Players

Details:

A bracket turn is a transition turn where you go forwards, backwards briefly, and then forwards going the opposite direction. Let's break it down into 3 steps:

1. Come in to start the turn with a wide base and basically do a two foot side stop.
2. Roll into a couple of backwards cross-overs (push pull).
3. Open up the hips and accelerate using your forward stride in the other direction.

Tips:

- Try to maintain your speed through the turn with your backwards cross-overs.
- Control the stick and upper body.
- Keep the head as level as possible, try to stay away from bobbing up and down.

How to Perform a Transition Turn

Details:

Transition turns in hockey are necessary any time you need to change direction in the game of hockey. In this video Dwayne Blais discusses how to transition from forwards to backwards.

To break it down into steps:

1. Side stop
2. Backwards cross-over / backwards start
3. Backwards skating into our C-cuts

Coaching Points

1. start with a wide base
2. Start low (instead of bobbing up and down)
3. Preferably 1, maybe 2 cross-overs as you transition backwards
4. Try to maintain a straight line instead of a wide semi-circle