

Head Referee Training Session

A. Be On Time!

The best way to create a good impression with players, coaches and parents is to be on time for your game. They pay for their ice time and it is valuable - so they are upset when they waste time waiting for referees to arrive. Start by giving yourself enough time to get to the rink get changed and relax for a moment before going on the ice. It is a good idea to check the clock of the actual rink when you arrive - that is the clock the teams will be looking at. The clocks in the referee rooms are often out of synch with the rink clocks. Make a note of the time difference between the two clocks and even try to be at the ice when the Zamboni is completing cleaning the ice. This will give you a chance to talk with the Zamboni operator to discuss the condition of the ice, if necessary. This will give the impression that this referee is really interested in refereeing the game. Also remember, as head referee you are responsible for getting "your team" of officials out on the ice on time.

B. You're In Charge!

As head referee you are the single person in charge of the game. The game doesn't start until you say it does. Before the game, always have a look around the rink to make sure everything is the way it should be. Your pre game check should include the condition of the boards (look for nails/screws sticking out), condition of the glass (report any broken or out of place glass to the Zamboni operator), or holes/ruts in the ice.....any safety concerns MUST be addressed and repaired prior to the start of the game. Check the rosters for the correct number of players and take this opportunity to make sure all players have a STOP sign on the back of their jerseys; do a general check as the players are warming up to make sure everyone has a neck guard. Review the game sheet to make sure all of the information is correct (rink, start time, team names, number of players and officials, GAME NUMBER).

C. Head Referee Positioning

1) Centre Ice Face Offs

You handle face offs at the beginning of each period and after any goal is scored. While it seems like "general practice" for head referees to motion to each goal tender and the timekeeper before starting each period - it should not be done. Just look at each of these people and make sure they seem ready to go before dropping the puck (make eye contact with the time keeper so you know they are ready). Once you have dropped the puck you want to move backwards towards the boards and out of the play. You may need to wait until the players have cleared the area, or you may need to pivot around the play, but do not change sides or turn you back to the play. Never turn yourself around so your back is to center ice.

2) In The Neutral Zone

When the play is in the neutral zone you want to be in position, following the play: if the puck is on your side of the ice you should be following at about 15 - 25 feet behind the play (4.5 - 6 meters) ; if the puck is on the other side of the ice you want to be closer - in fact, you can almost be opposite the play or at least no more than 8 - 10 feet behind the play (2.5 - 3 meters). This way you are not getting in the way of the play but you are close enough to see what is going on. **At no time should you be more than one zone behind the play.** If you allow this to happen you are too far away to see what is happening. In the event of a "stretch pass" or fast break situation where you are trapped behind the play, your linesmen should be prepared to cover for you at the net until you catch up. They are permitted to signal a goal (do not waive off missed goals) but should not blow the whistle.

3) In The End Zones

Good end zone positioning is crucial to prevent referees from getting in the way of the play and giving them the ability to see goals, goalie stoppages and penalties. Remember most penalties happen in the End Zone areas.

When you move into the zone, find your "home base" which is along the boards between the circle hash marks and the goal line. By being along the boards you will encourage the players to be in front of you. Occasionally you will have to "bump and pivot" either towards the goal line or the neutral zone to avoid the play. If you need to "pivot" around the play, allowing the play to go behind you briefly, return to your position on the boards as quickly as possible. By using the "bump and pivot" you should never need to turn your back to the players in the middle of the ice.

If the play moves to the opposite side of the ice (but still in the end zone) move in as far as the "face-off dot" (half way between home base and the nearest goal post). This will give you a better position of what is happening on the other side of the ice. As the play moves back to your side you need to skate backwards to the "home base" boards.

As the play moves towards the goal you want to slide yourself closer and closer towards the net. You should stay out of the way but close enough to see if the puck goes in or whether the goalie has frozen the puck. You also want to be close enough to see if a player's hand covers the puck in the crease. You can't see all of the in tight action at the net by standing way back against the boards.

You should never be directly behind the goal net. There is too much danger of getting in the way of the play, but you can change sides via the back of the net.

4) Keeping Up With The Play

There is really two ways that head referees can help themselves to keep up with the play:

(1) try to keep moving while you are in the end zone position - it is a lot easier to get moving down the ice when you are already moving, compared to starting off from a stand-still position.

(2) try to anticipate the way the play is about to go. This takes a lot of practice, but the more you do the role of head referee the better you will become in anticipating a change in direction of the flow of play and be moving in that direction. This will put you in better positions easier and sooner.

D. Line Change Procedure

This should be done at every stoppage of play, before every face-off. While the linesman is getting the puck and setting up for the face-off the head referee should get into position so both coaches can see you clearly. Make eye contact with the visiting coach to see if he is making a line change. After giving them 5 seconds to change raise your non whistle hand towards the visiting bench, indicating his time is up. Then make eye contact with the home coach to acknowledge that it is his turn to change. After giving the home team 5 seconds to change, drop your arm, which signals to your linesmen that the faceoff may proceed.

The line change procedure is a great opportunity to work on your rapport with the coaches. You will have the opportunity to look at each coach/bench to determine the general attitude and sense if there may be trouble.

Efficient line change procedures insure that the game flow is maintained and no time is wasted with long breaks between face-offs.

E. Types of Penalties

There are three basic types of penalties:

1) **Obstruction penalties** - these include hooking, holding, tripping, interference. They are the type of penalties that prevent the player from advancing the play or the offending player is gaining a positional advantage by obstruction his opponent.

2) **Contact penalties** - these include body checking, head contact, hits from behind, roughing. They are the penalties that result in a physical exchange of one player to another. These are the very serious penalties and can result in serious injuries to players.

3) **Stick penalties** - these include spearing, cross checking, butt ending, slashing and high sticking. These penalties involve a degree of violence using the player's stick and can result in serious injury.

The calling of penalties is not an easy task as you have found out. In many cases you have to judge the "degree" to which a penalty action takes place. For example: the stick is used to impede the player

slightly, but at what point is it actually a "hooking" penalty. Two players collide together - but to what extent is it body checking.

The best way to handle this is to set a standard in your head as to what is acceptable and what is not, this will become easier the more you are in situations where you are calling penalties. Watch other referees when you are a linesman or playing in your own game to get a better "feel" for when to call penalties. The more exposure to thinking about these penalties the clearer it will become.

There is more "grey area" for obstruction penalties than for contact and stick penalties. It is very important to call "obstruction" penalties when a player is attacking or has a scoring opportunity – there is more freedom with this type of penalty when the offense is away from the puck and may not have a detrimental effect on the play. Remember when you see an "obstruction" penalty occur, you can ask yourself... 1) Did the offending player gain an advantage by obstructing his opponent and 2) Did the act of obstructing the opponent possibly change the outcome of the play. If you answer yes to either or both of these questions, you MUST call the penalty.

Contact penalties and **stick penalties** have to be called to ensure the safety of players. By consistently calling these from the start of the game you will set the standard of play that you expect from the teams and by setting this standard early, you may actually need to call less penalties throughout the game. If you do not call these penalties, the play can get out of hand requiring you to call lots of penalties or someone may get hurt.

F. Making The Call

When a penalty occurs your arm should go up right away. You make a note of the player being penalized and wait for the offending team to gain possession and control of the puck.

When play has stopped and it is safe to do so, stop moving and signal towards the player receiving the penalty. Call the player's number, team colour and the penalty he is receiving. "Number 14, red, body checking". As you are doing this you motion the signal for this penalty. Once you have signaled the penalty you then skate directly to the scorekeeper always making sure that you are watching the players on the ice. At the time box, in a strong clear voice tell the score keeper the same information, including the number of penalty minutes, and motion the penalty signal again. Don't delay at the score-keepers area, but you want to make sure the score keeper has the right information to record on the gamesheet. By displaying confidence and consistency in your calls, you will gain the respect of the players and the coaches. This will prevent coaches from "debating" with you and show them that you are very sure of your calls.

G. Good Game Management

In an ideal hockey game the referee should be barely noticeable - all the attention should be on the players playing the game.

However, the head referee must be responsible in calling penalties and making decisions to insure a fair game and a safe one for the players. If physical penalties are let go it sends a message to the players that this kind of behaviour is acceptable and they will continue to "push" until someone ends up getting hurt. It also creates frustration with the coaches, who sense that you are not able to control the game or are frustrated because the other team is taking advantage by using behavior that should be penalized. On the other hand, too many "border line" penalties can slow a game down and take away from the flow of the game. You don't want the game to be all about the referee. So you need to use good judgment when calling penalties.

"Impact Penalty" - this is a penalty that a referee usually calls early in the game to tell the players - this is where I am "drawing the line" and it sets the standard for what you will call for the rest of the game. It generally is a physical penalty call and it sets a "tone" for the rest of the game. In many cases it helps settle a game down and players and coaches appreciate it. If left too late in the game - it has no effect - so do it early!

H. Communication With Coaches

It really is important for referees to have a good rapport with coaches. It usually starts in the warm up before the game. As head referee you might want to make some light comments with each of the coaches before the game or as you do the hand shake. By starting a short conversation with the coach, it shows that you are confident and relaxed with your role as referee. It allows you to start off on the right foot. Don't wait until you have an angry coach to talk to him, throughout the game there are opportunities to communicate with the coach to reduce his anxiety about your calls. If you do make a controversial call (such as waiving off a goal) don't hesitate to go over to the coaches and explain your call.

When you approach the bench, insist that the coach step down from the bench they are standing on to speak to you "eye-to-eye" - not looking down at you. It is very important to have one of the linesmen accompany you to the bench, so you always have a back-up as to what was said between you and the coach. Listen to the coach's point of view, state your explanation and stay firm with your decision - it is not a debate - it is a sharing of information (or point of view) and then getting on with the game.

It is so important to always be respectful - even if the coach is being disrespectful to you. Once you feel a coach has passed the line - give him a warning - respectfully. If he continues to be disrespectful you can give a 2 minute bench minor which should diffuse the situation. If you feel that the coach has continued to be unreasonable you may issue a GAME MISCONDUCT. With a game misconduct penalty make sure the game sheet records the name of the particular coach that is involved.

I. Game Sheets

As head referee you never sign the game sheet until the game is over and you have checked to make sure all of the information on the sheet is correct. This is particularly important if there are major penalties involved. In such cases you, as head referee, must take a photo of the game sheet and file a report via your eHockey account (<https://ehockey.hockeycanada.ca/ehockey/Account/login.aspx>) before 8.00AM the following day.

The most important thing to remember as the referee is that your decisions must be fair and consistent. Many situations where coaches or players get ejected from games are a result of their sense that the game has not been fair. By being consistent in your calls and enforcing the rules fairly to both teams you should be able to avoid most confrontations. In the event that you do have players or coaches who are excited, treat them with respect at all times. If you lower yourself to their level you are opening yourself up to a more serious situation that you won't have control of.