

Teaching Skating

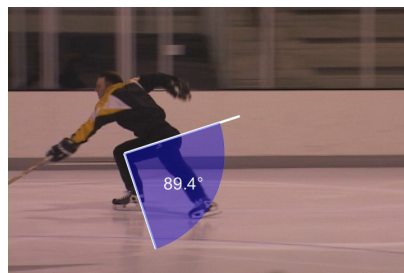
Elements of Proper Skating Form

The skating stride is a very complex series of movements. When teaching young skaters, it is not necessary to break the skating stride down into the most finite of movements. Rather, coaches should take care to address the major points of proper skating technique. This will give the young skater a solid foundation to build from as he or she progresses to higher levels of hockey. Coaches need to take care not to ignore the skating deficiencies of their more highly skilled players. These players are often ignored when it comes to technique training, impacting their ability to perform at the higher levels.

The following areas of skating technique should be addressed with young skaters.

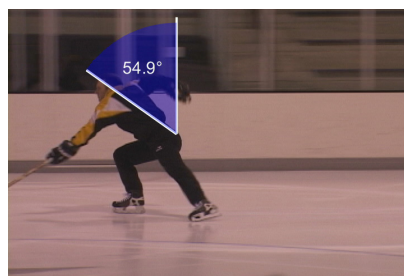
Proper Knee Bend – Knees Bent to 90 Degrees

The knee of the glide skate must be bent as close to 90 degrees as possible as the stride leg pushes to full extension. When the knee is set at an angle greater than 90 degrees, the player will progressively lose power and speed with each degree that the angle opens. Knee bend will go hand-in-hand with proper upper body position. Too great a forward lean will result in less knee bend.



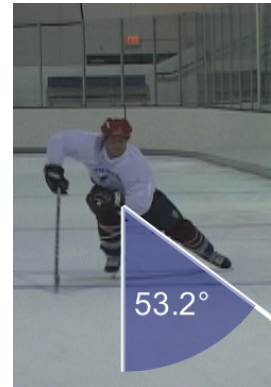
Forward Lean – Upper Body Lean 50 to 55 Degrees

The upper body, while remaining relatively still (quiet) in the skating stride is incredibly important. To effectively balance on their skates, players must be able to control the weight of the upper body. Additionally, a forward lean that exceeds 60 degrees will interfere with a skater's ability to make a full, wide push with proper knee bend. A forward lean that is less than 45 degrees may allow a player to bend the knees properly, but will limit forward momentum and, thus, limit the ability of the player to reach top speed.



Wide Push – Forces Are to the Side

Skaters must push to the side with force, extending through the hip, knee and ankle to achieve top speed. The angle of each of the aforementioned joints must fully open to create full speed and power. The stride finishes with the snap of the toe – in other words, the last part of the skater in contact with the ice is the front part of the inside edge. By firing the leg to the side as much as possible, the skater is able to keep more of the blade in contact with the ice for a longer period of time and create friction against the ice over a greater distance. Combined with the power of the push, this creates speed.



Full Return – Toe, Knee, Nose Alignment

After completing the wide stride, the skater must return the skate under the body. The skater should keep the skate low to the ice, driving the skate under the body to a point where the toe is pointing forward and the glide skate is on the flat of the blade or just slightly leaning to an outside edge. The knee and the nose should be directly over the toe of the skate (as in the previous picture). The knee is bent over the toe with good ankle flexion, causing the knee to be two inches or more over the toe of the skate.

Arm Swing – One Hand or Two?

There is much debate about whether to teach the skating stride with one hand or two hands on the stick. The truth of the matter is that it is necessary to teach both. The key to the arm swing is fully extending the arm(s), not crossing the midpoint of the body. With one hand, the thumb (palm) is up as the arm swings forward and the elbow swings back, bending to 90 degrees on the return. With two hands, the top hand extends in front of the body (again, not past the midpoint) and back to a 90 degree elbow bend. Coaches should require players to keep the stick on the ice at all times (both one and two hands). Coaches should also stress that without full extension of the arms it is very difficult, if not impossible, to reach full extension with the legs.

Skill Progressions - Skating

BASIC STANCE

- Skates under the body
- Slight forward lean
- Knees bent to 90 degrees

BALANCE

- Glide on two skates
- Glide on one skate
- Controlling the weight of the upper body while performing more advanced balance maneuvers

EDGE CONTROL

- Flat of the blade
- Inside edges
 - Proper knee bend
 - Ankles roll controls the edge
- Outside edges
 - Proper knee bend
 - Proper upper body position (inside shoulder is up)

FORWARD STRIDE

- Proper body position
 - Upper body lean 50-55 degrees
 - Knees bent to 90 degrees
 - Ankle flexion to 45 degrees (knees 2" over the toe of the skates)
 - Skates directly under the body (full recovery)
- Full extension of the stride leg
 - Wide (side) push to ensure maximum stride length and power
 - Leg straightens through all three joints: hip, knee and ankle
 - Full push through the toe of the skate (toe snap)
- Full recovery of the return skate
 - Skate returns under the body to achieve toe, knee, nose alignment

- Proper arm swing
 - One hand on stick: arm swings forward with the thumb (palm) up.
 - Arm does not cross the mid-point of the body.
 - Ideal glove position at full arm extension is just above the knee.
 - Two hands on stick: arms fully extend to the front, stick remains on the ice and the wrists roll to support the extension.

STOPS

- One foot “snowplow” stop
- Two foot “snowplow” stop
- One foot stop on inside edge
- One foot stop on outside edge
- Parallel stop
 - Wide base, with skates parallel
 - Great knee bend, eyes and chest are up
- Skid Stop (hockey stop)
 - Stop is made on the outside edge of the inside skate and inside edge of the outside skate
 - Inside shoulder is up and weight is centered over the inside skate
 - Outside skate pushes out and diagonally in relation to the inside skate
 - Wide base, great knee bend, eyes and chest are up

STARTS

- Forward Start
 - Toes turned out as far as possible, skater on inside edges
 - Extreme forward lean - Skater should feel like they are falling forward
- Crossunder Start (used in conjunction with the skid stop)
 - Push from the outside edge of the inside skate
 - Outside skate drives across inside skate – upper body turns in direction of travel

BACKWARD STRIDE

- Full extension of the backward stride leg
 - Wide “D” push on inside edge to gain stride length and power
 - Leg straightens through all three joints: hip, knee and ankle
 - Full push through the toe of the skate
- Full recovery under the shoulders

TURNS & TRANSITIONS

- Control turn
- Tight turn
 - Inside shoulder remains up to counterbalance weight
 - Weight is centered over the outside edge of the inside skate
 - The body moves in progression: head, shoulders, hands, lower body
- Forward to backward transitions
- Backward to forward transitions

CROSSUNDERS

- Forward Crossunders
 - Wide stride push and crossunder push
 - Proper body position, level shoulders and deep knee bend
- Backward Crossunders
 - Using inside edges to “reach and pull”

Skating Drills

Balance Drills

One-Leg Glide: Glide on one leg, lifting opposite knee up toward the chest. Stick is held with two hands and extended in front of the body just above the waist. Players should strive to bring the knee up to stick level. This drill is designed to get players comfortable with balancing on one skate.



Two-foot Seated Glide: Keeping upper body in proper position (slight forward lean – 50-55 degrees), players sit down over the tops of skates, gliding on the flats of the blades. Breezers should touch the backs of the skates. One hand on the stick with arms extended for additional balance.



One-foot Tuck: Keeping upper body in a proper position (back straight, forward lean of 50-55 degrees) player tucks one skate behind the other and sits down, gliding on the flat of the blade.



Alternating One-foot Tuck: Same technique as above, but players alternate feet. Players should go all the way down into a full tuck position and then come all the way up to a straight-leg position. Quickly switch skates (don't glide on two skates) and repeat the tuck.

Spirals: Players lift one leg up behind body while balancing over the remaining skate. The raised leg should be kept straight and the skate raised to as high a point as possible. Eyes and chest remain up, with the back arched to support balance. Players may keep two hands on the stick, but should not lean on the stick for balance.



Shoot the Duck: Players get into a seated glide position and extend one leg in front of the body, gliding on one skate. Slight upper body lean and forward extension of arms will help players to maintain balance. Body should be kept still as excessive movement will cause the player to fall.



Edgework Drills

Big C's on Inside Edges: Players perform turns on the inside edge of the outside skate, with the body facing the benches and then the bleachers. Tuck the inside skate slightly behind the outside leg on each turn. Knees must be bent. Push to full extension coming out of each turn.



Outside Edge Stepovers: Players perform turns on the outside edge of the inside skate, with the body facing the benches and then the bleachers. Keeping knees bent, players should work to get a full crossunder push coming out of each turn.



Sculling: With knees bent and upper body in proper position, skaters push out to full extension with both skates. Skaters use the inside edges on the back half of the blades to push and return, with the skates never leaving the ice. Players should work to keep the upper body in the same position, not bobbing up and down.



Inside Edge Figure 8 Turns: Two cones are placed approximately 15 feet apart. Player skates in a figure 8 pattern. As the player approaches each cone, he or she will hold the inside edge of the outside skate as they make a turn around the cone. Knee must be bent and the inside shoulder should remain up.



Outside Edge Figure 8 Turns: Two cones are placed approximately 15 feet apart. Player skates in a figure 8 pattern. As the player approaches each cone, he or she will hold the outside edge of the inside skate as they make a turn around the cone. Knee must be bent and the inside shoulder should remain up.



Hold Inside/Outside Edge on a Circle:

Players start in single formation on the boards near the blue line. The skaters take full strides to gain speed approaching the inside of an end zone circle. As they get to the circle, they attempt to hold either an inside edge or an outside edge of one skate all the way around the circle. Players will finish the drill with a sprint to the middle of the blue line and repeat the drill with the opposite skate, approaching the circle from the outside.



Line Jumps: Players line up against boards at any of the lines (blue or red). After taking one stride to generate momentum, the player jumps on one foot and lands on either the inside or outside edge. Players are challenged to remain on one skate throughout the drill, not taking any strides or having to ground the second skate for balance.



Forward Stride Drills

Push 'n Glide: This drill is an excellent starting point for younger players to master a wide push while learning to maintain balance on the glide skate. Players should make a full push to the side with one leg only (alternate skates as a progression). After making the full push, return the stride skate under the body and make contact with the glide skate. The return skate should be held slightly off the ice for a one or two-count while the skater maintains good knee bend. Two hands should be on the stick in this drill.



Glide Skate on the Line: As a progression of the Push 'n Glide, skaters should attempt to cross the ice keeping the glide skate in contact with either blue line or the red line. This will force the skater to keep the glide skate in a proper position, with the toe pointed forward.



Board Strides: Players face glass, getting body into proper position. To find this position, they should stand tall with the skates close together under the body and toes pointing forward, find their hips and push forward until their upper body is angled to approximately 55 degrees with the back straight and sit down into a 90 degree knee bend. While arm length away from the boards, players hold boards and stride to full extension. They complete each stride with a full recovery, toes again pointing forward with the body in a proper position.



Seated Forward Stride: Players hold the stick in front of the body, in line with their eyes. Knees should be bent beyond the point of comfort, as close to 90 degrees as possible. The skater makes a full extension and full return, tapping the skates together under the body – then repeat with the other leg. The stick should remain level and motionless throughout the drill. The goal is to achieve power in the stride while maintaining a “quiet” upper body.



Isolation Pushes: Stick is held behind the back and is held in the gloves (not the arms), with the arms loose and palms facing forward. Begin with the body in a proper position. With one leg (either right or left for the entire drill), players push to full extension. They hold full extension for a one-count and then return the skate to a position where the heel of the stride skate hits the toe of the glide skate. Repeat for length of ice.

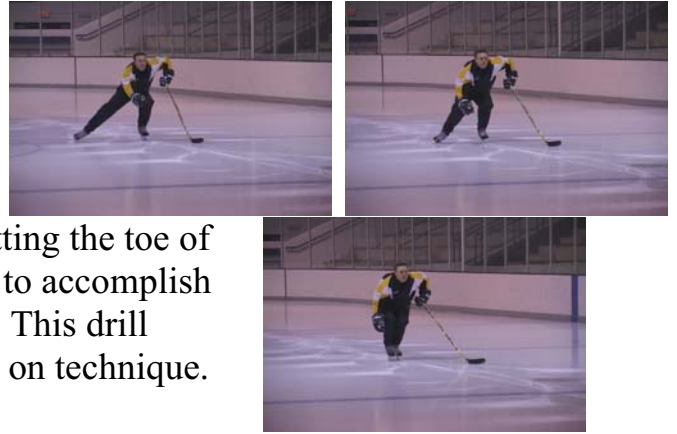


Heel/Toe Tap: This drill is basically the Isolation Push with alternating legs. Follow instructions of the Isolation Push, alternating right and left legs – pushing to full extension and completing with a full heel-to-toe recovery.

C-Cuts to Full Extension: Skates do not leave the ice as players perform C-cuts to full extension. At full extension, the knee of glide leg should be bent deeply and the stride leg is pushed wide to full extension. The heel of the stride skate returns to touch the toe of the glide skate before skater makes the next C-cut. Arms swing forward and back, with the extended arm not crossing the midpoint of the body. Extended arm should be at a height just above the top of the knee.



Snap & Scrape: Players perform full, extended strides (again, pushing as wide as possible), firing the hips, knees and ankles. Upon completion of each stride, player scrapes the entire blade of the skate to full recovery, with the heel of the stride skate hitting the toe of the glide skate – this is incredibly important to accomplish in this drill. Players make a full arm swing. This drill should be done at $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ speed with a focus on technique.



Progressive Speed: Players focus on proper technique. $\frac{1}{2}$ speed from the goal line to the first blue line. $\frac{1}{2}$ speed between the blue lines. Full speed from the far blue line in to the goal line. Start with proper technique and maintain the technique as speed increases throughout the drill.

Backward Skating Drills

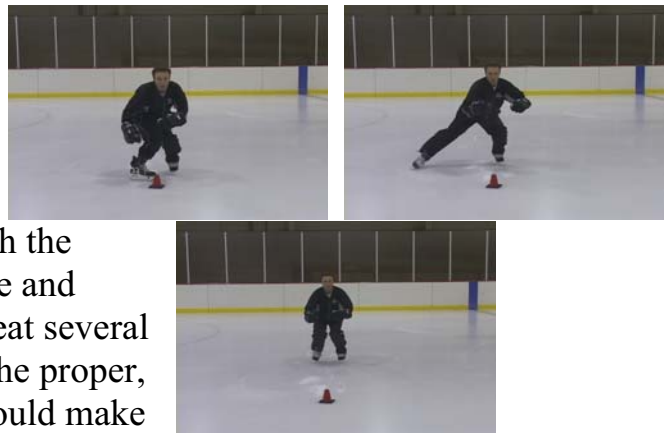
Board C-Cuts: Skaters face the boards. They should extend their arms, place their hands on the boards and sit down, with chest and eyes up, into proper backward skating

position. Maintaining good knee bend, skaters turn the outside edge of one skate to the boards, forming an upside-down “L” position with the skates. The skater then makes a strong C-Cut thrust with the skate, completing the motion behind the body. Repeat several times on each skate.



Moustache Drill: Each player has a cone and a small area of ice. The player starts at the cone with the body in proper backward skating position. Turning one skate into the upside-down “L” position, the player makes a

powerful C-Cut and returns the skate underneath the body. He or she will then glide back to the cone and repeat the motion with the opposite skate. Repeat several times with each skate. If the player is making the proper, fully extended c-cut push, the cuts in the ice should make the cone look as if it has grown a “moustache”.



Backward Sculling: With knees bent and upper body in proper position, skaters push out to full extension with both skates. Skaters use the inside edges on the middle of the blades to push and return, with the skates never leaving the ice. Players should work to keep the upper body in the same position, not bobbing up and down. Players should have one hand on the stick for this drill. The goal is for players to make powerful C-Cut pushes with both legs at the same time.



Backward Isolation Cuts: Stick is held in front of the body at eye level with the arms straight and extended fully. Begin with the body in a proper position. With one leg (either right or left for the entire drill), players make a C-Cut push to full extension. They return the skate to a position where the return skate taps the glide skate to encourage a full return. Repeat for length of ice (or across the ice if drill is being run cross-ice, which is recommended for younger players).



Stick Drill: Sticks are laid in a straight line across the ice. Skaters (without sticks) make strong C-Cut pushes with the outside leg, attempting to keep the inside skate traveling in a straight line near the sticks without hitting them. Skaters must have good knee bend and be traveling on the flat of the blade of the glide skate. This drill is designed to help players overcome the “S” motion that many of our young skaters develop because they swing the hips when skating backward rather than making a proper C-Cut push.



Backward Skate Taps: This drill is an extension of Backward Isolation Cuts with alternating legs. Follow instructions of the Isolation Push, alternating right and left legs – fully extended C-Cut pushes with the skates tapping together under the body to promote a full recovery.



Tap-Down Drill: Players can either partner up or a coach can go with each skater (recommended for young players). Skaters make full-speed backward strides down the ice. Their partner skates with them (forward), keeping his or her stick on the skaters helmet, encouraging them to stay level. Coaches serving as partners can also check for other breakdowns in technique during this drill.

Stopping Drills

Stationary Skate Scrapes: Players are in a stationary position. With good knee bend, players slowly scrape the top of the ice with one skate. Players should maintain balance and keep the rest of the body still while scraping the ice.



Stick-on-the-Skates Scrapes: A progression of the stationary skate scrape, players line up along the boards facing in one direction. The butt end of the stick is placed on the inside skate. Players apply pressure to the inside skate with the stick as they scrape the skate out as far as possible. The player then steps the outside foot back into a position under the body and repeats the movement across the ice. This drill should be done slowly and players should be reminded to keep the toes of both skates pointing forward.



Jump Stop Drill: Place three sticks an equal distance from one another across the ice. Players skate slowly with knees bent and jump over each stick. While jumping over each stick, players should turn to the side. As they land, players should scrape the outside skate until coming to a complete stop. As a progression this drill can be done the length of the ice.



Partner Pull and Stop: Coach and player are partners. The coach skates slowly backward pulling the player with his or her stick. The stick should be parallel to the ice, with the coach's hands to the outside and the player's hands on the inside. At regular intervals, the coach will turn to the side and use his or her momentum to turn the player to the side. The player will scrape the skates to come into a proper stop position.

Two Cone Stops & Starts: Cones are set in a staggered, diagonal position to mimic the foot positioning in a skid (hockey) stop. Players make a proper forward start with toes turned out and weight forward on the inside edges. After making the skid stop and sitting as low as possible into the stop, then explode out of the stop with a proper crossunder start and sprint back to their line.

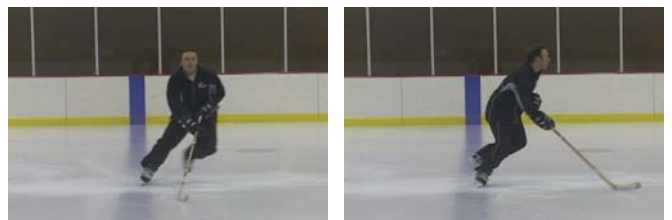


Two Stick Mirror Stops & Starts: Players partner up and lay sticks on the ice in a straight line, approximately 8-10 feet apart. Players face each other at one end of the sticks. They simultaneously sprint from one end of the sticks to the other, making a proper skid stop and crossunder start. Drill should be done for no more than 20 seconds.

Figure 8 Parallel Stops: Cones are placed about 20 feet apart. Players perform two figure 8 maneuvers, making a parallel (skates directly across from one another with a wide base) stop, allowing the body to drift backward. Players open the hips and sprint. This is not a turn. Make sure players make the stop and allow body to drift slowly back.



Open Hip Stops on Lines: Players line up across the blue line and sprint to the red line (and back) making an open hip stop and forward start. The open hip stop must be done on the inside edge of the outside skate with the skates moving into a “Mohawk” position with the shoulders and hips opening in the intended direction of travel.



Outside Edge Stops on Lines: Players line up across the blue line and sprint to the red line (and back) making stops on the outside edge of the inside skate. The inside shoulder must remain up to counterbalance the weight. Knee should be bent and weight should be evenly distributed across the skate blade.



Six-cone Open Hip Stops: Six cones are staggered between the goal line and the blue line. As players approach each cone, they make an open hip stop facing the direction they are coming from, opening up and sprinting to the next cone – again stopping in the same direction. The purpose of this drill is to get players used to using the open hip stop in situations where they have to turn their body and sprint back in a direction greater than 180 degrees from their stopped position.

Crossunder Drills

C-Cuts on Circles: Station no more than four players on the outside of any of the face-off circles. Skaters should bend knees and perform C-Cuts to full extension around the circle. Skaters should be balanced on the outside edge of the inside skate. Two hands are on the stick and coaches must remind players to keep the inside shoulder up throughout the drill. This drill trains players to make a wide push with the outside leg (stride leg) to begin a proper crossunder.



Slow, Extended Crossunders: Drill is done on circles. Players push to full (wide) extension with stride push and then the crossunder (inside leg) push. Hold each extended stride for a one-count or a two-count, maintaining a high inside shoulder to counterbalance the weight of the upper body.



Airplane Drill, Forward: Players execute forward crossunders on the circles. The inside arm is held straight, with the glove above the head to teach proper body positioning. Focus on achieving both the stride push and crossunder push. $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ speed until players can successfully keep glove above head.



Full-Ice Forward Crossunders: Players execute one crossunder in each direction for the full length of the ice, executing both the stride push and crossunder push. Following each crossunder, the player should step out of the crossunder and repeat in the opposite direction, covering as much ice as possible. Once the player is able to execute this drill at slower speeds, he or she should be challenged to execute this drill at a faster pace and/or with a puck.



Walking Backward Crossunders: Players walk across the ice in a straight line. Knees are bent, eyes and chest are up. Outside skate stays close to the ice and crosses in front of the inside skate. From the “Y” position, player extends the inside skate out as far as possible, landing in a position on both inside edges. Knees are still bent in this position.

$\frac{3}{4}$ Speed Backward Crossunders on Circles: Players execute backward crossunders on circles without sticks. Players reach to the inside as far as possible, landing with a wide base on the inside edges of both skates. They pull back to a “Y” position (the outside skate does not leave the ice) and repeat. No more than three or four skaters on each circle. Encourage players to look forward rather than over the shoulder - players should move aside if they see that another player is moving faster than they are.



Airplane Drill, Backward: Players execute backward crossunders on circles. The stick is laid across the shoulders with an emphasis on keeping the inside shoulder up to counterbalance weight. Players reach to the inside as far as possible, landing with a wide base on the inside edges of both skates. They pull back to a “Y” position (the outside skate does not leave the ice) and repeat.



Full-Ice Backward Crossunders: Players execute one crossunder in each direction for the full length of the ice, pulling into a “Y” position and reaching out to the inside edges. Following each crossunder, the player should step out of the crossunder and repeat in the opposite direction, covering as much ice as possible. Once the player is able to execute this drill at slower speeds, he or she should be challenged to execute this drill at a faster pace.



Turns and Transitions

Two Stick Turns: Players partner up and lay their sticks end-to-end with at least ten feet in between the sticks. The first skater makes turns in a “figure 8” fashion, skating through the middle of the sticks so that turns can be made in both directions. The body turns in a progression; head, shoulders, hands and legs. The inside shoulder is up, counterbalancing the weight. Players should keep their hands in front of the body, as if they had a stick. Alternate skaters every twenty seconds.



Airplane Turns: Players begin on the goal line and approach a cone set on the blue line (up to four lines of players). The stick is carried across the shoulders. The upper body should remain level throughout the drill, both as the player skates toward the cone and through the turn. As the player approaches the cone, he or she maintains great knee bend and turns around the cone. The inside shoulder remains up to counterbalance the weight. If the inside shoulder dips in, it will be noticeable to both coach and player because of the stick position.



Two Stick Transitions: Players partner up and lay their sticks end-to-end with at least ten feet in between the sticks. The first skater makes a full forward stride down one side of the sticks, drops into a parallel stop and makes a powerful backward crossunder to transition around the stick. After making the backward crossunder, the player makes a full backward stride down the opposite side of the sticks. Upon reaching the end of the stick, he or she will make a smooth backward-to-forward transition and repeat the drill. Alternate skaters every twenty seconds.

