

A Beginners Guide To Ice Hockey Positions And Roles

(copied from <http://www.youthhockeystuff.com/>)

Warning – What you are about to read is not your standard ice hockey positions post. This is an 1800 word beast that not only identifies ice hockey positions, but also goes into great depth describing the roles and responsibilities for each of these positions.

For a player that is new to ice hockey, there are many things to learn.

A good coach will focus on skating and basic hockey fundamentals before putting any emphasis on **hockey positions and roles**. As a parent, that often leaves you frustrated, as you see your child struggling to understand the roles for the basic **positions in hockey**.

It's not until a youth player gets into their Squirt years that they'll start to have a better understanding of **ice hockey positions** and roles. Again, more frustration for mom and dad.

The intent of this post, for you as a hockey parent, is to be able to sit down with your son or daughter and explain ice hockey positions and roles. Take the time and talk about how these different hockey positions relate to not only playing offense but also a strong hockey defense.

Ice Hockey Positions And Roles – The Basics

First off, let's describe the different ice hockey positions and roles during a game. The game of hockey consists of 5 skaters plus one goalie. Each of these players has a certain responsibility during the course of a game, and each of these hockey positions must work with the other hockey positions to form a cohesive team. These ice hockey positions are:

Center

Considered one of the three forwards on the ice, and is the equivalent of the quarterback of the team.

As you can guess, the center focuses on the center portion of the ice, away from the side boards, running from goal to goal. The center must be a strong skater, be able to take face-offs, and is typically a very creative player who focuses on passing to his wing-men and opens up the game.

Wings

There are two wings in the game, the left & right wing, and they are considered the other two forwards on the ice. The wings focus of play is outside the center area of the ice next to the boards. As you would expect, the right wing typically works the right side of the ice, must be more of a physical player who is good along the boards and in the corners.

The left wing is responsible for the other side of the ice, on the left. Traditionally this was a left-handed shooter, but that's not necessarily the case in today's game. As with the right wing, they must be able to dig the puck off the boards and be able to play strong hockey defense.

Defensemen

Like the wings, there are two defensemen in the game, one on the left and right side respectively. Their primary purpose is to stop the opposing team from taking a shot on their goal.

There are different types of defensemen in the game, one of which is very defensive minded and very seldom leaves his own zone with the puck. The other is more offensive minded, and is not afraid to bring the puck up the ice to set up the offense (but he/she must always be ready to get back on defense when the opposing team has control of the puck)

Goalie

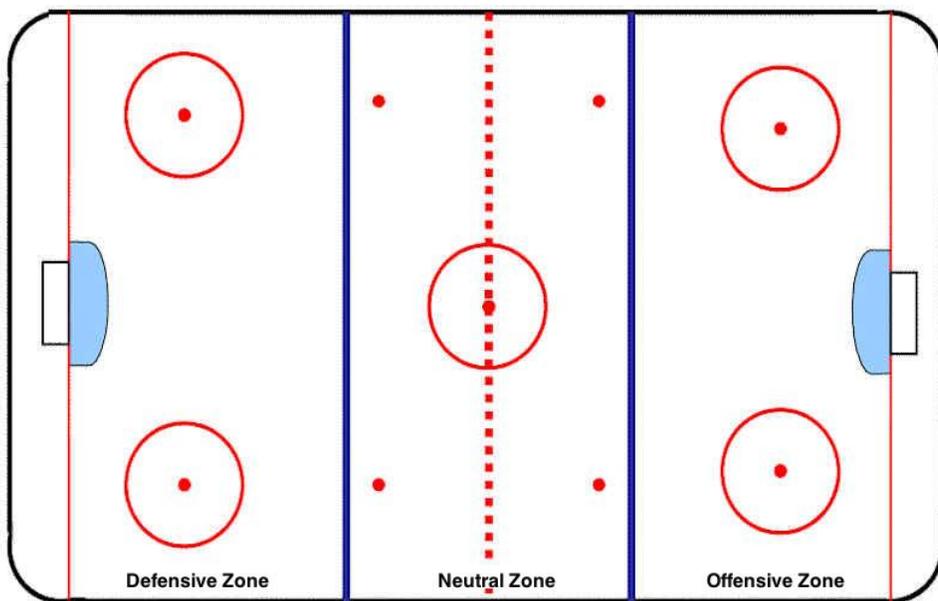
He's or she's the lucky one that gets to keep the puck out of the net.

The center and wings are considered more offensive minded ice hockey positions, while the defensemen are considered more defensive minded. However in game situations the center and wings must be able to play defense, while the defensemen are very capable of providing offense and scoring goals.

Hockey Positions – Defense

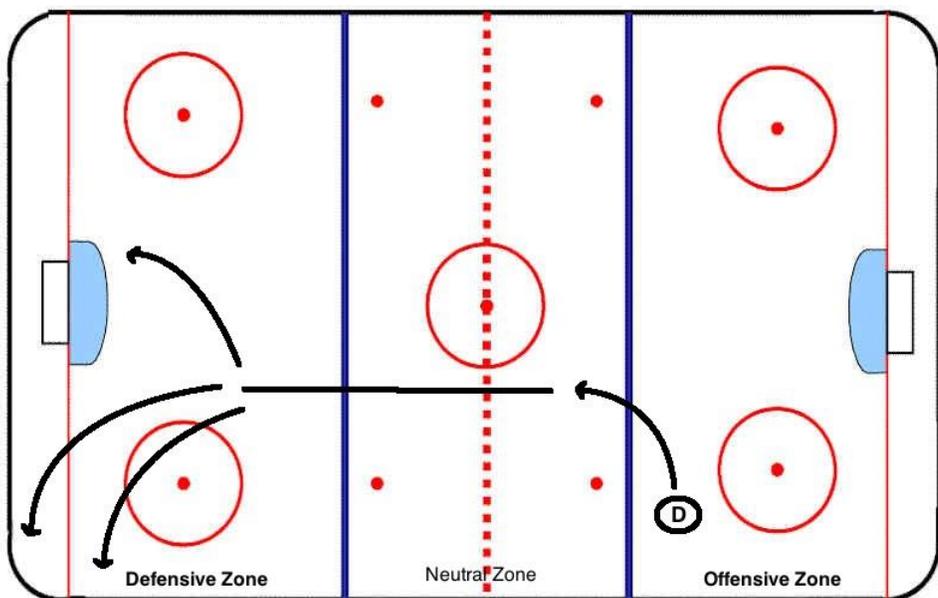
Now that we've described the general responsibilities of the different ice hockey positions, let's focus on hockey roles when the opposing team has the puck.

Before we get too far, let's describe how the ice is split into the three different zones; the offensive zone, neutral zone, and defensive zone. This is important because the responsibility for each of these hockey positions change based upon the zone the puck currently resides in.



- The offensive zone starts at the blue line and goes to the end board on the side of the ice that your team is shooting at the opponents goal.
- The neutral zone starts at one blue line and goes to the other blue line (the middle of the ice rink).
- The defensive zone starts at the other blue line and goes to the end board on the side of the ice that the opposing team is shooting at your goal.

Defensemen – Hockey Defense Responsibilities by Zone



Offensive Zone

- Defensemen don't venture too far past the blue line (called holding the blue line) and follow the puck from side to side each staying on their side of the ice. Think of it as patrolling the blue line.

- The defenseman that is closest to the middle of the ice acts as the free safety, and needs to keep all five of the opposing players in front of him/her at all times.

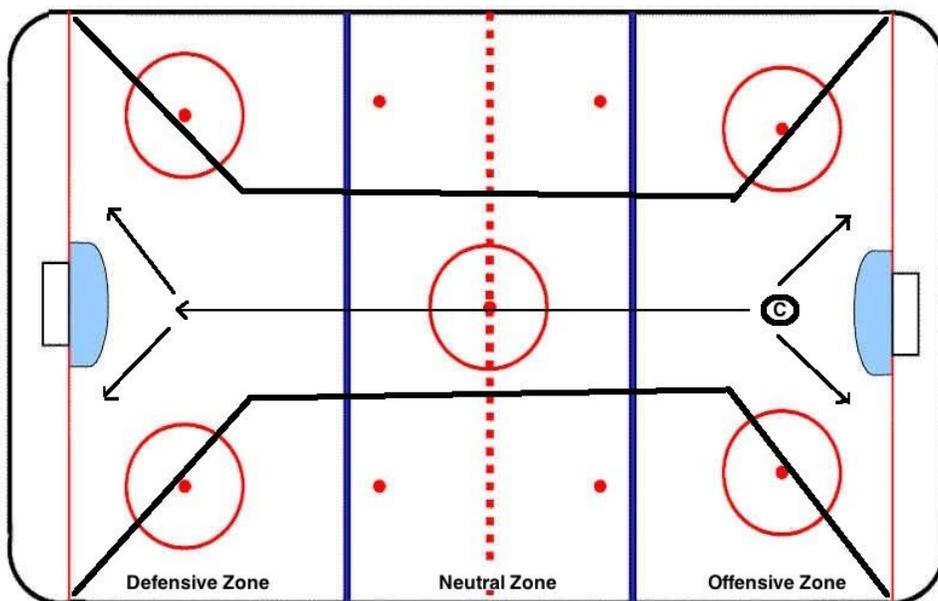
Neutral Zone

- Each defenseman plays their side of the ice, again trying to keep the opponents in front of them at all times.

Defensive Zone

- Force the play to the outside, towards the boards.
- The defenseman that is on the “strong side” (the side of the ice that the puck is on), blocks the puck carrier from going to the net. In other words, you need to stay between the puck carrier and the net.
- The defenseman that is on the “weak side” (the side of the ice that the puck is not on) covers the front of the net.

Center – Hockey Defense Responsibilities by Zone



Offensive Zone

- Assist the wing that is covering the puck carrier.

Neutral Zone

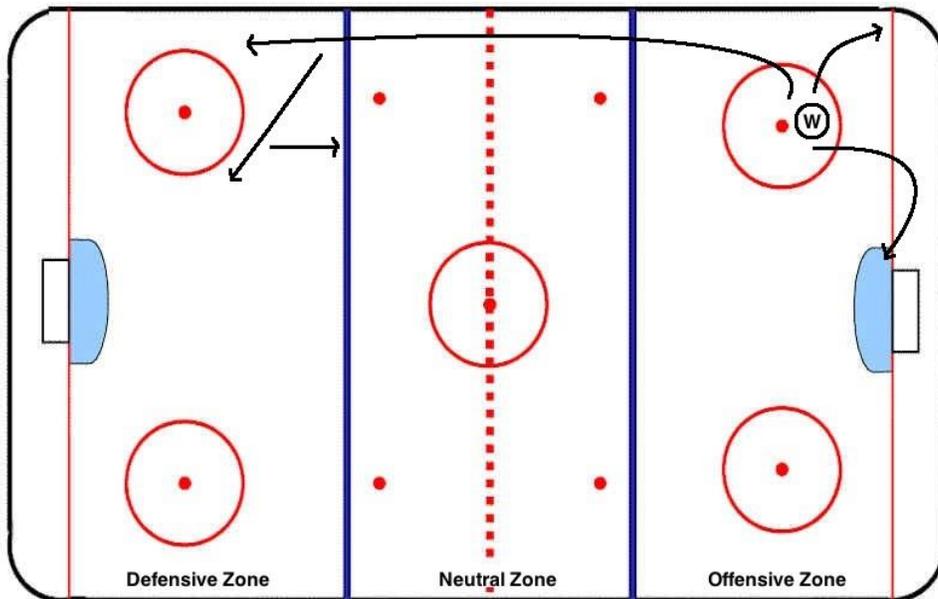
- Cover the middle portion of the ice and force the puck carrier to the outside, towards the boards.

Defensive Zone

- If the puck is low in the zone (closer to the net than the blue line), cover the front of the net. Also backs up the strong side defensemen when the puck is in the corners.

- When the puck is high in the zone (closer to the blue line), cover the middle of the ice from the blue line to about the top of the circles.

Wings – Hockey Defense Responsibilities by Zone



Offensive Zone

- The strong side wing (the side of the ice the puck is currently on) forces the puck carrier towards the boards.
- The weak side wing plays on top of the circle on his/her side of the ice and must be ready to assist if the puck comes over to his side.
- When the puck moves into the weak side (now the strong side), that weak side wing moves in on an angle to take the skater on.

Neutral Zone

- Both wings cover their side of the ice and are typically the last defensive players to come out of their zone.
- Always keep the inside position and try to stay between the opponent and the puck.

Defensive Zone

- Back check (stay on the skater at all times) the opponent all the way into the defensive zone and force the play into the corners.
- When the puck is low in the zone, the strong side wing works the boards and cuts off the passing route to the opposing teams point player. The weak side wing covers the middle portion of the ice.
- When the puck is high in the zone, the strong side wing covers the opposing teams point player that is by the boards. The weak side wing covers the opposing teams middle point player.

Hockey Positions – Offense

We've focused on hockey defense so far, but a strong hockey defense does no good if you can't score goals. Given that, I don't want to leave out the offensive part of the game. As with the defensive side of the game, a player's responsibilities change based upon the zone the puck is in.

Defensemen – Hockey Offense Responsibilities by Zone

Offensive Zone

- Strong side defensemen moves to the top of the circle.
- Weak side defensemen moves to just inside the blue line on his/her side of the ice and holds there.

Neutral Zone

- After making a pass, the strong side defensemen follows the play into the offensive zone.
- Weak side defensemen is the last player to leave the neutral zone on the attacking team and moves to the middle of the ice. Helps to protect against a turn over.

Defensive Zone

- Moves the puck quickly up the ice.
- Weak side defensemen moves to just inside the blue line to protect against any turnovers.

Center – Hockey Offense Responsibilities by Zone

Offensive Zone

- The center is the play-maker, and looks to pass to one of his/her wings.
- If does not have the puck, trails the puck carrier at the top of the circle or breaks to the front of the net.
- If carrying the puck over the blue line, stops before the top of the circle and looks to pass to a wing or take the shot.

Neutral Zone

- Move up the middle of the ice whether they are carrying the puck or not.

Defensive Zone

- Stays between the circles near the top end of the circles.
- If receiving a pass, angle towards either board and carry into the neutral zone or look to pass.

Wing – Hockey Offense Responsibilities by Zone

Offensive Zone

- If carrying the puck, break into zone to the top of the circle. Break to the net for a shot, pass back to the trailing skater (the center), or pass to the weak side wing.

- If not carrying the puck, get open when skating into the zone. Skate into the face off circle and angle towards the net.

Neutral Zone

- Both wings stay in their respective outside lane, whether carrying the puck or not.

Defensive Zone

- Strong side wing holds against the boards no higher then the face off dot. Moves puck out of the zone or passes to center.
- Weak side wing moves to face off dot when the puck goes to the other side of the ice. As the puck moves up ice, move out zone staying on your side of the ice.

Ice Hockey Positions Conclusion

So now you should have a basic understanding of ice hockey positions and roles. In addition, how these roles relate to both the offensive and defensive side of the game.

Keep in mind this post was written for the new hockey player. It is meant to provide a starting point to understand the different ice hockey positions and roles. There are many more advanced plays a coach can teach, but this should give a basic understanding of hockey positioning.