



Pulling motion. ©BBS

[Printer friendly page](#)

Skating skills for centers and wings

By Robby Glantz

This month I'd like to focus on skating tips geared for forwards. (Of course, these tips can be beneficial for defensemen as well). Three of the most important skating skills a center or wing can master are forward lateral moves, face-off positioning and forward starts.

Forward lateral moves

Forward lateral moves in games are used to elude the defender or to keep them off balance, it can also be used when making a fake or simply to generate more speed or momentum. Most players use the cross-around technique (more commonly referred to as the crossover) to make a lateral move, which is accomplished by first crossing over to one side and then quickly back to the other.

Fundamentals: To improve your cross-around lateral moves it is important that you learn to take them to the side, rather than in a direct, straight line (of course, this does not mean that you simply go side to side, you still need to maintain your forward speed, as well). To accomplish this, you should try to think of this maneuver as having three separate parts:

The first part is the cross-around maneuver itself, where the outside leg comes in front of the inside leg and begins to take your momentum to the side. The second part is the crossing under, or pulling motion of the inside leg against the ice (forming the letter "y" with your legs), which should give you even more speed to the side.

The third part comes when you spring off your inside edge of the cross-around foot (outside foot) as far to the side as possible landing on the inside edge of the other foot (the one that was pulling under the body). This third aspect of the maneuver will be the fundamental that you will most likely have trouble with because it is very difficult to center all of your body weight over the inside edge in order to get the power to jump to the side. And yet, this is a vital element of the lateral maneuver that only can improve with plenty of practice.

Face-off positioning

Face-offs are something we do not often talk about in terms of skating tips, but the best face-off people are the ones who are strongest over their skates. Simply watch a Mark Messier or an Eric Lindros when they approach the circle and try to trace the fundamentals and techniques that they are applying.

Fundamentals: Approach the face-off with your legs spread outside your shoulders. You need this wide-base of the legs for sturdiness over your skates and for better balance. And, as with all the skating tips that we give, probably the most vital thing that you can do is to bend the knees. Sit your butt down so that your knees are at least 2" over the toes of the skates (try to get lower than the opponent that you are going against), while being wary of not bending at the back in an effort to get low.

It is also very important that you not only widen the base of your legs as discussed above, but also that you are planted over two strong inside edges, both rolled to about a 45° angle, to assure a strong grip in the ice. If you stand on the flats of your blades, you will be sliding too much and not digging in as much as you need to, to consistently win the face-offs. Also, how you hold the stick is a personal preference, but most of the best face-off people bring their bottom hand down low on the shaft for a stronger grip on the stick.

Forward starts

To gain an explosive start, you should picture in your mind what a sprinter looks like when the gun goes off. The sprinter is trying to thrust forward—not upward—to gain that extra advantage at the start. You'll also notice their initial strides come from the balls of the feet. It is extremely similar in hockey. We want to feel like we are thrusting forward, taking quick strides that may look like short strides to the naked eye but are, in fact, best performed when fully extending the pushing leg. Remember to stay low throughout the move, trying to cover as much distance as you can while still making very rapid strides

Fundamentals: Make sure you start with your skates directly under your body forming the letter "V" (Arrow-Tip Position) and heels together and knees turned outward. It is very important that you maintain this narrow base and diamond shape of the lower body throughout the start. And again you must bend the knees 2" out over the toes of your skates.

Thrust your body forward by applying 100% of your body weight to the pushing foot's front part of the inside edge (the toe of the skate), and then land on the front part of the inside edge on the other foot (with this skate directly under your body) and then explode off of this landing foot even further forward (again from the inside edge, toe of the skate).

Remember to jump forward, not upward and attempt to have your initial three to four strides come from the toe part of the inside edge of your skate blade. This will give you that explosive, running type motion that you often see of quickest players in the NHL like Paul Kariya or Wayne Gretzky.

Robby Glantz, power skating coach for the Los Angeles Kings, Swedish Champions Malmö, and the German National Teams, conducts skating programs throughout North America and Europe.