

## Golden Rules for Defense

1. Always back your partner – on the offenses blue line, in the neutral zone, and especially in the defense of zone.
2. Always one defenseman in front of the net when the opposition has the puck in your zone or there is a danger that they may gain possession. For young defenseman (mites through early peewees) the role should always be one defenseman in front of the net when the puck is in your zone.
3. Do not leave the offenses zone too soon. Leaving too soon is a much more common mistake than leaving too late for a large percentage of defenseman from mites through high school. It backs the defense up too fast and too far and makes pacing the attacking forward much harder.
4. Always play defense first. If attacking with the puck only go deep into the offenses of zone until prime scoring opportunity is over if you are part of it
5. Never play 1 on 1 head on. Give the attacker a little room on one side to force him to go where you want him to go.
6. Stagger one defenseman up a little farther than the other 2 on 2 and 3 on 2 situations. The up man will generally be nearest the puck carrier.
7. Shoot intelligently from the point. The best shot is always low, generally not too hard so it stays in scoring area for rebounds and is accurate. Defenseman seldom are shooting to score but rather to put the puck into the scoring area so that forwards can score. Always look up so shots are not sent into opposing players and so that passes to wide wings or your D partner can be made when appropriate.
8. Do not “tie up” with people in front of the net; rather gain possession and control of the puck.
9. Do not ever “tie up” with an opposing player anywhere when your team is a man short. As the players on the team with a penalty tie up and are out of the play the odds get better on the power play i.e. : 4 on 3 is better than 5 on 4, 3 on 2 is better than 4 on 3, etc.
10. Do not “stand” looking for someone to pass to, especially in the defense of zone. Look - move - look - pass. This reduces the chances of being surprised from the back or side, makes the pass more accurate, and forces the opponent to begin retreating.
11. When turning with a player breaking around the outside, keep the feet moving, don't lunge or reach without moving your feet. Young players have an especially hard time with this, mainly because of their lack of skating and turning.
12. Work, work, work, on backwards skating and turning. Defenseman must be as comfortable going backwards and sideways as they are skating forward. Young players all the way through college must continue to practice these skills as their bodies grow and change.
13. Do not pass to covered forwards – carry it, cross pass to partner or eat it if necessary. Defenseman must gain confidence in cross passing and in carrying the puck to open up the attack, allowing their forward to get open. Check only for purpose. Checking just for the sake of like it is seldom of value and creates risk of self-injury, missed checks, and leaving opposition players open, in addition to receiving penalties.
14. Communicate – with your partner, to goalkeeper and your forwards. It is an important part of teamwork. Do not communicate with opposing players – it seldom is of value and exposes your emotions.
15. Follow your attacking forwards closely 20 to 30 feet and move quickly into the offenses zone after the puck goes into the zone. Many defensemen are lazy moving up the ice and allow the puck to turn around before they ever get over the blue line.
16. The blue lines are critical. Always clear the puck over the defensive blue line as a first priority – then move up to blue line quickly. Defend both blue lines with as much vigor as is reasonable as the opposition attacks down the ice – they are natural points to stop the attack.
17. Learn the critical skills of flipping the puck out of the zone and deflecting the puck off the glass out of the zone at the earliest possible age. They are key puck movement skills. Feeding the oppositions point has been a defensive weakness at all levels since day one.