

Guidance to Umpires on the 2009 Rules of INDOOR Hockey

This guide for umpires on the 2009 Rules of Indoor Hockey is designed to give readers things to think about when umpiring under these rules. It is deliberate that all the rule changes are not listed. There are many rule changes and even more sections of the rule book that have been re-written to improve clarity and understanding. All of the rule changes are highlighted in the published rules and there is no substitute for reading them, and reading them thoroughly.

The rest of this guide will assume the reader is an umpire who has read the FIH 2009 Indoor Hockey Rules and has access to them to read alongside the reading of this guide. Any reference to “you” refers to you as an umpire.

For the purposes of this guide, match official(s) mean the person or persons who keep the scoreboard accurate and, typically, are responsible for timing the match – whether these are officially appointed or just helping out at an indoor event or tournament.

To save excessive wording in this guide, the half of the pitch that includes the goal that a team are attacking is called the “attacking half”.

Areas of Major Change

The main rule changes are listed on pages 4 and 5 of the rule book. Please be aware that the list in the rule book does not cover all of the changes. The main changes are:

- The rules have been extensively revised to convert the terminology under the old rules of “goalkeeper wearing only protective headgear” to the 2009 rules “field player with goalkeeping privileges”.
- Each team can call for a “time-out” (of a maximum of one minute), through the team captain or a team official once in each half.
- The definition of a shot has been changed. Until now a shot had to be going towards the goal. Under the new rules a shot is a shot if the player’s intention is to score, even if the shot is misdirected and is not going towards the goal. This has implications when considering whether lifted balls within the circle are allowed or not.
- At a penalty corner, the defending team can now decide how many players to use as “defenders”. If the team has a goalkeeper or a field player with goalkeeping privileges, that person must be in the goal. All other players from the defending team can choose to either act as defenders or not. Players acting as defenders must take the “traditional” position behind the back line on the other side of the goal from where the penalty corner is taken. Players not acting as defenders must be in the other half of the pitch, beyond the centre line (see the technical notes on pitch sizes below). The defending team can defend with all their field players or with no field players or with anything in between.
- The ending of a penalty corner has now been made consistent, whether the penalty corner is in normal time or in time extended at the end of a half.
- At any restart, the ball must now move a metre before it is played by any other player from the same team as the taker. This is now consistent with outdoor hockey.
- From a centre pass or a free push (which includes any restart following the ball over the side-board and over the back-line), the taker is now allowed to play the ball again. The ball does not need to move a metre before it can be played again by the taker.
- For all free pushes in the attacking half, all players (including team-mates) must be 3m from the ball. Such free pushes cannot be played directly into the circle by the taker (and there are additional restrictions covering when it can be played into the circle following a self-pass).

Guidance to Umpires on the 2009 Rules of INDOOR Hockey

- Free pushes for the attacking team cannot be taken within 3m of the circle. The ball must be moved to the nearest point on the pitch that is 3m from the circle.

Technical Notes – Pitch Sizes

The rule changes make the centre line on the pitch very important as it now determines the legitimate options for a player taking a free push and where players can stand at penalty corners.

It is therefore important that the centre line is clearly marked. It is recognised that the venues used for indoor hockey at most levels rarely have indoor hockey as the priority and it is possible that, for some pitches, there will be no solid line as the centre line. For such pitches it is recommended that the side boards are marked with clearly visible tape at their centre so that, at the very least, players (and umpires) are aware of where the centre line of the pitch would be.

It is also recognised that at some lower levels (and for training purposes) venues are used which do not comply with the minimum pitch size in accordance with the rules. For pitches that are smaller than the minimum set in the rules, the new rules regarding penalty corners may cause additional problems.

On such pitches, defenders who opt to be in the other half of the pitch rather than defend a penalty corner in the conventional place will actually be closer to the attackers at the top of the circle than those defending behind the back line. This may mean that they are in a position to make a tackle before the attackers have had the opportunity to play the ball.

If pitches are used which are less than 36m in length, tournament or match organisers may deem it appropriate to introduce a tournament regulation regarding where players from the defending team who choose not to “defend” a penalty corner are allowed to stand. Requiring such players to be in the opposite circle may be appropriate on such pitches. However, such regulations should not be introduced on pitches that are 36m or more in length.

Time-Outs

Time-outs can be called by the team captain or a team official (manager, coach, physiotherapist or doctor). They can only be called when the ball is not in play and cannot be called between the award and the taking of a penalty stroke or penalty corner. They also cannot be called within the last two minutes of a half.

A team needs to call a time-out by notifying an umpire, who will signal the time out by making the shape of a T using their hands in front of their chest.

The maximum length of a time-out is one minute. Umpires must restart the game after exactly one minute. Play can be restarted before the end of one minute if both teams are ready to play.

The duration of time-outs needs to be carefully controlled. At events where there are match officials, the match officials should assist with the timing of time-outs. The details need to be agreed in advance between the umpires (or umpire manager) and the match officials or tournament organisers.

Teams may need to be “encouraged” to return to the pitch and be ready for play after 50 seconds, by giving them a clear warning that the time-out is coming to an end.

Guidance to Umpires on the 2009 Rules of INDOOR Hockey

The Self-Pass

A player taking a free push or centre pass is now allowed to be the next player to play the ball. This is called a self-pass. The self-pass cannot be used at a penalty corner nor, obviously, at a penalty stroke.

The new self-pass makes it more important that umpires manage centre passes, ensuring opponents are more than 3 metres away and that the centre pass is not taken prior to the umpire blowing their whistle to start/restart the game.

The self-pass does not have to move 1 metre before it is played again by the taker. Now, as in outdoor hockey, the ball must move a metre before it is played by any other player from the same team as the taker.

The rules state that “the action of taking the free push and of next playing the ball must be two separate actions”. In practice this just means that the ball must not stay in contact with the stick and it should be clear (to everybody) that the free push has been taken and that the ball is now in play. If the taker simply approaches the ball and carries the ball off in a “contact dribble” (where the stick and ball remain in contact) the free push has not been taken.

This must be very clear for indoor hockey, where unlike outdoor, the next action will always be a push and not a hit and the player's instinct is to leave the stick on the ball to push it.

Location of Re-Starts

The rules still say that a free push is to be taken close to the offence, where “close to” means within playing distance of where the offence occurred and with no significant advantage gained.

Just because a self-pass is now an option, you should not be overly strict on where restarts are taken. The purpose of the new rules is to increase the flow in games and the last thing good umpires should do is to stop that flow by being pedantic.

The rules state that the location from which a free push is taken must be more precise when the offence occurs close to the (attacking) circle. There is no change to this wording so good umpires will continue to operate as they have been in this respect.

Stationary Ball at Re-Starts

The rules continue to state that the ball must be stationary for all restarts.

Good umpires have always allowed restarts with a ball that is moving slightly where no significant advantage is gained. You should be aware that a significant advantage **can** be gained when taking a self-pass with a moving ball but must also note that you should not interfere with flow unless it is really necessary. Providing the “two actions” of a self-pass make it clear to everyone including opponents when the free push is taken, you need be no more or less fussy about the ball being stationary than you were under the previous rules.

If a player makes an attempt to stop the ball before taking a self-pass, you should normally allow the self-pass to be taken quickly, even if the ball is still moving slightly.

Guidance to Umpires on the 2009 Rules of INDOOR Hockey

Moveable Free Pushes

You need to be particularly aware of the potential problems caused when the position of a free push can be determined by the player taking it. This applies to defensive restarts (“9m pushes”) and free pushes that have been moved “up 5”. In the first case, the defender can take the free push anywhere up to 9.1 metres from the back line (and, if following an offence in the circle, from anywhere in the circle) and in the second anywhere up to 5 metres up-field of the original offence. Players will instinctively propel the ball to where they want to take the free push with their stick and this can be confused with the player actually taking the free push. Once the player has stopped the ball, umpires should normally accept that the next action taken is the taking of the free push.

In these situations, the taker’s actions need to be such that the taking of the free push is obvious to everyone including opponents. If not, the free push should be taken again (if, and only if, an opposing player has been disadvantaged).

Persistent Infringements at Free Pushes

Where restarts are taken from the wrong place, or taken using a self-pass but without two separate actions, or taken with a moving ball, the umpire should ensure that the restart is taken again.

However, if restarts continue to be taken incorrectly by a team, after a few have been corrected by the umpires, the restart should be considered an offence and a free push (or penalty corner for such offences within the defending circle) should be awarded to the opposition.

Re-Starts with Players within 3 Metres

The new rules mean that free pushes can be taken much more quickly than before, as they can be taken by the first player to get to the ball without waiting for supporting team-mates. Because the restarts can be taken more quickly, there are likely to be more situations – all over the pitch – where a player is in a position to take a restart when opposing players are within 3 metres.

The FIH guidance is that restarts need not be delayed if there are players within 3 metres who, according to the rules, should not be – **providing they are not attempting to play the ball or influence play**. This obviously includes opponents and, if the restart is within the attacking half, team-mates of the person taking the restart.

Even if team-mates of the taker are within 3 metres for a quick restart in the attacking half, the restart need not be delayed if this/these team-mates are not influencing play.

Management of 3 Metres

Opponents still within 3 metres when the restart is taken must not interfere with the play until they have moved 3 metres away from where the restart was taken, or the ball has moved 3 metres.

Good umpires have always been very strict with any opponent preventing a restart, particularly when they do so at a time when the taker has an option to pass to an unmarked colleague. With the new self-pass option, the taker **always** has the option of a pass to an unmarked player as, by definition, they can take a self-pass and, as every opponent needs to be 3 metres away (or not interfere) the taker should always be “unmarked”.

Guidance to Umpires on the 2009 Rules of INDOOR Hockey

It is important to recognise that it is a player's starting position and what they do within the 3 metres that is important. If what they do within 3 metres of the restart does not interfere with the options of the taker, they should not be penalised for rejoining play once they have got the correct distance. Note that players normally need to have their sticks and bodies more than 3 metres from the ball at restarts and they need to ensure that they have moved wholly 3 metres before rejoining play. Such players cannot reach outside the "3 metres zone" if their body is still within it.

You need to be very firm to ensure that opponents do not interfere with restarts and punish offenders accordingly. Personal penalties (a verbal caution, warning or suspension) would be appropriate in all cases where the offender's actions are deliberate, particularly where the offender's actions prevent a good attacking opportunity. You should also recognise that a good attacking opportunity can exist from many different areas of the pitch. Within the attacking half, an opponent preventing a restart would normally be punished by the award of a penalty corner, in addition to the appropriate personal penalty.

However, some players will try to take unfair advantage by attempting to take a restart very quickly and moving the ball directly into an opponent who has had no chance to retreat, in an attempt to prompt you to take action against that opponent. You need to be vigilant to ensure that you are not "conned" in this way. You have a number of options available to deal in such cases. A retake with a warning to the taker might be appropriate in the first case but you also have the option of awarding a free push against the taker for more obvious attempts to deliberately manufacture offences, or for repeated infringements. You should only reverse a free push for a player taking the ball directly into an opponent when you are absolutely sure that the action was intentional to manufacture an offence.

Because of the new rules, particularly the effect of the rules for restarts within the attacking half, all teams will practice both attacking and defending options in training. It is important that umpires allow players to be 3 metres away and not insist that players are 4 or 5 metres away. Forcing players to be significantly more than 3 metres away is as bad as allowing them to be within 3 metres for the effect on both attacking and defending options at these restarts. Players and coaches will be (rightly) aggrieved if the things they have practiced and trained for are not allowed by an umpire who insists on a greater distance than 3 metres.

Managing the 3 metres all over the pitch is the key to the self-pass working. Understand the options the player has to play the ball, and then make sure that no opponent within 3 metres influences their ability to take one of those options.

Remember that this includes the centre pass where, in the past, umpires have not been too vigilant on players from the opposition being 3 metres away. It is more important now that there are more options for the team taking the centre pass.

Free Pushes in the Attacking Half

At a 'self-pass' ...

the ball must travel at least 3 metres from the point of the free push (not necessarily in a single direction) before the taker himself can play the ball into the circle

Alternatively: -

the ball must be touched, deflected or pushed by any other player before it enters or can be played into the circle;

or the ball must touch the side-board before it can be played into the circle by any player

Guidance to Umpires on the 2009 Rules of INDOOR Hockey

A free push that is played onto the sideboard and then enters the circle without any player playing it since it touched the sideboard has not satisfied the rule and should be penalised.

A player that takes a free push by playing it onto the sideboard and then plays it into the circle has satisfied the rule even if the ball has only moved a short distance to the sideboard and back. This should therefore be allowed.

As a result of the above, there can be an additional advantage for the taker of the free push to take it as close to the sideboard as possible. Umpires should be aware of this and prevent the taker from moving a free push closer to the sideboard to gain advantage.

Free Pushes in the Attacking Half – Travelling 3 Metres

The 2009 Rules and the associated FIH Umpires Briefing makes it clear that travelling 3 metres means in any direction. By way of example, if a player takes a free push as a self-pass within the attacking half and dribbles the ball 1.5 metres to the left and then 1.5 metres to the right, the ball is back where it started but can now be played into the circle as it has travelled 3 metres.

Free Pushes in the Attacking Half – Playing the Ball into the Circle

Remember that the offence only occurs when the ball enters the circle. It is not an offence to play the ball towards the circle, only if the ball actually enters the circle (without being touched by another player etc.).

Free Pushes in the Attacking Half – Near to the Centre Line

If a free push is taken inside the attacking half and the player chooses to take a self-pass and carry the ball outside the attacking half, the requirements of the free push are still in action (e.g. ball still has to travel 3 metres before it can be played into the circle by that player if no-one else plays it).

There is now a potential advantage for an attacking team taking a free push outside the attacking half instead of inside it (as that means they can play the ball directly into the circle and that their team-mates can be within 3 metres of the free push). Be pro-active and use your common sense regarding the placement of free pushes either close to the centre line. If you want the free push to be taken inside the attacking half, call to the players immediately the decision is made so that they have a chance to restart the game accordingly. Players will be extremely frustrated by poor umpires who give no warning and then penalise a player for trying a restart "from the wrong place".

Free Pushes in the Attacking Half – Umpiring the 3 Metres around the Circle

For attacking free pushes that are awarded within 3 metres of the circle, the free push must be moved to the nearest point 3 metres from the circle.

Players can choose to take free pushes up to a metre from the side-board. If players choose to do this, the free push should be taken from the nearest point that is both 3 metres from the circle and a metre from the side-board. Be aware that at many indoor venues, the circle does not always end on the back line, but meets the boards making positioning of free pushes at 3 metres from the circle and up to a metre from the boards a key factor.

Guidance to Umpires on the 2009 Rules of INDOOR Hockey

You need to recognise that the new rules make it very difficult to take a quick free push if the free push is awarded just outside the circle (i.e. within the 3m zone). The taker has to take the ball 3 metres away from the circle to take the free push, which will inevitably slow the play and allow defenders some time to get into position.

You should take this into account when reading both actual advantage and the possibility of advantage accruing in these areas. As a result you should “hold the whistle” momentarily to see if an advantage might accrue before awarding a free push.

Penalty Corners

Now that players from the team defending a penalty corner can stay up-field in the opposition half, umpires must be pro-active to ensure players are in legitimate positions before any penalty corner is taken. This will need both umpires to work together and will probably mean that the supporting umpire will need to remain on or around the centre line to ensure that defending players do not break early over the centre line.

Supporting umpires will also have to think about their positions to provide maximum support to their colleague while ensuring that they do not get in the way of any fast breaks towards their end of the pitch, particularly as there may now be players in their half waiting for the ball to be won by their team-mates defending the penalty corner.

It is also important to recognise that a player from the defending team breaking over the half-way line early is as serious an offence as a defender breaking from the back-line early and should be penalised in the same way. Typically this would result in a caution for the first early break of either kind by a team in a match, a warning (green card) for the second early break and a temporary suspension for all future early breaks.

Lifted Shots

With the change in the definition of a shot at goal, lifted shots are not against the rules if the player’s intention is to score, even if the shot is misdirected and is actually missing the goal.

The rule change makes a number of differences specific to indoor hockey. The difference between indoor and outdoor hockey is that, until now, a lifted flick outdoors is legal unless it is dangerous (anywhere on the pitch) and a lifted flick indoors used to be legal only if it was actually going towards the goal (not if it was going wide of the goal).

Think of this example of the effect of the change, a flick at a penalty corner is off the floor but below knee height and going 6 inches wide and played at by a defender with his stick to stop it but the ball is deflected into the goal.

The correct decision last year would be a free push to the defending team, this year would be a goal. Think of this similar example, in open play a slow looping shot to go over a goalkeeper who has come out to close down an attacker near the side-boards, where the slow looping shot is going six inches wide and is then deflected by a defenders stick (or body) into the goal.

The correct decision last year would be a free push to the defending team; this year would be a goal.

Guidance to Umpires on the 2009 Rules of INDOOR Hockey

In both scenarios the correct decision would be goal in outdoor hockey whether prior to the 2009 rules or using the 2009 rules, hence the impact is less in outdoor hockey.

At penalty corners however, as clarified in the FIH Umpire Guidance, when the ball is missing the goal and a defender is hit high on the body, the correct decision is always a free push to the defence (for dangerous play).

A defender that takes up a position on or near the goal-line in line with the goal, particularly if they do so behind their goalkeeper, does so in the knowledge that the opposition will try to score and, therefore, is at least contributing to (if not causing) any subsequent danger to themselves. As a result, historically, the defender would be penalised if hit by the ball, at any height. This is still the case.

However, a defender that takes up a position that is wholly or partly outside the line of the goal should be protected from any shot that is going wide of the goal and is dangerous. When any shot that is actually going wide of the goal hits a defender, you need to consider whether the defender had the opportunity to avoid the ball, taking the height and speed of the shot and the skill level of the players concerned into account. If the defender did not have the time to react safely, the correct decision should be a free push to the defence (for dangerous play).

Anything VERY wide of the goal would probably be penalised as a lifted ball that is not a legitimate attempt to score.

Advantage or Not...

The new rules will require all umpires to rethink their understanding of advantage. Players can now take a free push quickly, without necessarily waiting for supporting team mates. As a result, a quickly awarded free push when the player has control of the ball will give the player the option of taking a self-pass and effectively continuing with the same passage of play if **they** choose to.

For the last few years umpires have been actively encouraged to look for situations where advantage can be played, rather than stopping the game by penalising an offence. This is still the case, but you need to be aware that awarding a free push quickly may be the best “advantage” for the team more often than in the past.

For certain situations you should think through your “advantage philosophy” before you umpire under the new rules, taking into account the speed and skill level of the matches you umpire. Without doubt you will adapt your approach as the players adapt their playing styles to the new rules, but it is important you think through any likely changes to your philosophy for the different situations and areas of the pitch.

General Umpiring Comments

The experience of umpires (and umpire managers) at tournaments where the new rules have been used, or trialled, has been that umpires have concentrated so hard on the new rules that they have lost sight of all of the other rules!

When you are umpiring for the first few times under the new rules, do not worry excessively about them to the point that serious offences are missed or that you spend your time slowing the play by forcing free pushes to be taken from a different place. Continue to concentrate hardest on the things that really matter!

Guidance to Umpires on the 2009 Rules of INDOOR Hockey

Watch hockey under the new rules, talk to the players, player coaches and umpire coaches in your local association, talk to colleagues about the ways they are adjusting and incorporate those things that work for you.

With the game now faster, umpires have to be physically as well as mentally fit for the game. Under the new rules there will be more actual hockey played, less time wasted waiting for restarts and less opportunity for an aggrieved offender to complain because the game has now often moved on – literally and, consequently, umpiring should be more enjoyable than ever before.

This guide has been collated by David Lane with invaluable input from the following people (in alphabetical order): Dawn Henning, Andrew Kennedy, Jane Nockolds, Liz Pelling and Lia Waine.

It is fully supported by England Hockey and FIH.

