

In the 2009 rulebook, the free hit rule has been re-worded. It now incorporates two variations on the old rule: the option to 'auto' or 'self' pass and the restriction when hitting the ball directly into the circle from the attacking 23 metre area.

Outlined below is the actual wording issued by FIH. Under each part of the rule, there is a guide to umpires and a brief commentary to provide some clarity.

**Note: In all cases below, when the term 'free hit' is used, the rule will also apply to side-line hit ins and long corners inside the attacking 23 metre area. Note also that the 'auto pass' can be used to start the game, or to re-start after a goal has been scored.**

### 13.1 Location of a free hit:

**a** a free hit is taken close to where the offence occurred

*'Close to' means within playing distance of where the offence occurred and with no significant advantage gained. The location from which a free hit is taken must be more precise inside the 23 metre area.*

*Commentary and guidelines: Around the field, the placement of the free hit has become more liberal. In particular when a team takes a free hit back from where the infringement occurred, a 10 – 20 metre tolerance may be appropriate. Clearly when the ball is taken ahead of the spot, then maybe a 5 metre tolerance is acceptable. Inside the attacking 23 metre area, free hits (and auto passes) need to be managed more closely.*

**b** a free hit awarded within 5 metres of the circle to the attack is taken at the nearest point 5 metres from the circle

*Commentary and guidelines: Most turfs have the dotted line marked 5 metres from the circle edge. No attacking free hit (or auto pass) is allowed within this line and the circle edge. Instead, the ball needs to be taken directly back and outside the dotted 5 m line.*

*FIH Clarification: if the free hit is called within the hash marks, but outside the circle, the attack takes the free hit from the hash marks in retrospect to where the foul occurred.*

**c** a free hit awarded outside the circle to the defence within 15 metres of the back-line is taken up to 15 metres from the back-line in line with the location of the offence, parallel to the side-line.

*Commentary and guidelines: Using old terminology – "Take it up to the 16"*

**d** a free hit awarded inside the circle to the defence is taken anywhere inside the circle or up to 15 metres from the back-line in line with the location of the offence, parallel to the side-line.

*Commentary and guidelines: If a free hit is awarded inside the circle, it can be taken anywhere from inside the circle (or straight up to "the 16").*

### 13.2 Procedures for taking a free hit, centre pass and putting the ball back into play after it has been outside the field:

**a** the ball must be stationary

*Commentary and guidelines: In many cases the ball will not be stationary. However, it needs to be made clear that the free hit (or auto pass) has been taken.*

**b** opponents must be at least 5 metres from the ball

*If an opponent is within 5 metres of the ball, they must not interfere with the taking of the free hit or must not play or attempt to play the ball. If this player is not playing the ball, attempting to play the ball or influencing play, the free hit need not be delayed.*

*Commentary and guidelines: Allow play to carry on in the spirit of open, flowing hockey. Deal with players who interfere deliberately under misconduct. However, if a player chooses to 'auto pass' then they should not be permitted to try and manufacture a foul by running at the opposition who may not have finished retreating 5 metres. The 'auto pass' rule is intended to speed up the taking of free hits – not to create an opportunity for a manufactured foul.*

*FIH Clarification: Any free hit to the attack within the **attacking 23m** all players must be 5m from the ball except the person taking the free hit. A self pass can be used and if players are not 5m and not impacting the play, the play should go on. Players who are **NOT** 5m cannot play or interfere with **the** game until the ball has travelled 5M (the distance they should have stayed away), or if an opponent or other player is involved in play (open play situation as in normal free hit; this player was 5m away at take so can attempt at any moment after the take of the free hit)*

**c** when a free hit is awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, all players other than the player taking the free hit must be at least 5 metres from the ball

*Commentary and guidelines: Self-explanatory*

*FIH Clarification: When a free hit is awarded in the **attacking 23m** area all players must be 5m, this does not apply on a free hit in the **defensive 23m** area.*

**d** the ball is moved using a push or hit

*Commentary and guidelines: Self-explanatory*

**e** the ball must not be raised intentionally directly from the free hit

*Commentary and guidelines: Self-explanatory*

**f** if the player taking the free hit is the next player to play the ball, the actions of taking the free hit and of next playing the ball must be two separate actions

*Commentary and guidelines: This rule describes the 'auto pass.' It means that the auto pass needs to show clearly that the free hit (to ones self) has been taken. Therefore a player should attempt to make the ball stationary and pass to himself or herself, before say dribbling down the field with the ball. The temptation might be for players to carry on when the whistle goes without formally auto passing. This rule requires them to make the auto pass and their next action, two separate events.*

**g** before another player of the team which took the free hit is allowed to play the ball, the ball must move at least 1 metre

*The ball does not have to move 1 metre before the player taking the free hit may play the ball again.*

*Commentary and guidelines: The movement of the ball one metre to a player of the same team (conventional pass) is now an established rule. However, it too has been liberalised. The movement of the ball one meter at a free hit allows for opposition players to compete for the ball more safely when contesting the ball at an overhead pass situation. However, note that when a player does an 'auto pass,' then the ball does not need to move one metre.*

*FIH Clarification: Self pass does not have to travel 1m, pass to another player must travel 1m.*

**Source:** <http://www.hockeynz.co.nz/umpiring/rulesandinterpretations/>

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**h** from a free hit awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, the ball must not be played into the circle until it has traveled at least 5 metres or has been touched by a player of either team other than the player taking the free hit.

*If the player taking the free hit continues to play the ball (no other players has played it)*

- *That player may play the ball any number of times, but*
- *The ball must travel 5m, before*
- *That player plays the ball into the circle by hitting or pushing the ball again.*

*Alternatively:*

- *Another player of either team who can legitimately play the ball must deflect, hit or push the ball before enters the circle, or*
- *After this (2nd) player has touched the ball, it can be played into the circle by the player who took the free hit*

*Commentary and guidelines: Under no circumstances may a player play the ball directly into the circle from a free hit (or auto pass) within the attacking 23 metre area. The ball must first have traveled (moved) 5 metres (conventional or auto pass) or be touched by another player of either team.*

*FIH Clarification: Taking a free hit at 5m from the circle with a self pass, and nobody interfering/defending the attack, the ball must travel 5m and then the ball can be played into the circle (by played means to touch the ball with the stick). If the free hit is taken with a self pass, defenders will, as expected, approach the attacker and might touch, or intercept the ball, if this happens the ball can be played into the circle, but may have only travelled 3m before touched by a defender or incoming teammate. The text of the rule has been amended with an added guidance:*

*All parts of Rule 13.2 apply as appropriate to a free hit, centre pass and putting the ball back into play after it has been outside the field. In particular rule 13.2.h also applies if the attack puts the ball back into play within the 23m area after it has been outside the field.*