Good Hockey Habits by Guy Godowsky
Good habits make good hockey players. University of Alaska Fairbanks head hockey coach Guy Godowsky says that the following are hockey habits he emphasizes at the Division I college level. Most of these habits apply to all the levels. The sooner a player develops these habits the deeper they will root and the more consistent they will be. When college and pro scouts and coaches evaluate players they evaluate the consistency of many of these habits.

General Habits

These hockey habits apply generally for all aspects of play:

1) Take What is Given. Be aware of and take advantage of opportunities given to you. If you are given a shot, passing lane, time or open ice, then take it. Do not miss the opportunities that are given to you. They are free. See that they are there and take them.

2) Head Up. Keep your head up. You must see the play and read it. You must see the opportunities given to you so that you can take what is given. Keep your head up or you will be hit and hurt.

3) Talk. **Talk to your teammates**. Hockey is a team sport. Players must talk if they are going to work together. Talk on both offense and defence.

4) Hard off. Skate hard when coming off for a change up. Quick hard changes keep offensive and defensive pressure on the opposition. Coming off hard is an easy way to set and keep the tempo high.

5) Never Retaliate. Retaliation will cost the team a penalty. Referees often see the retaliation but often miss the first penalty. Do not let the opposition see that they have gotten to you. Keep your emotions under control.

6) Only Captains Talk To Referee. Unless you are a captain carrying out your duties do not talk to the referee. Nothing good will come of it. Direct all communications through the coach and captain. This will buy time and show that the team is intelligent and disciplined. Keep your emotions under control.

7) Show Positive Emotion. Emotion is good and should be shown when it is positive. Emotion is powerful. Positive emotion will generate positive results. Negative emotions will generate negative results. Be emotional but keep it positive.

Defensive Habits Playing The Puck Carrier - Role 3

These hockey habits apply when playing the man with the puck:

1) 5 on 5 Stick and Pin. When playing at even strength, hit your man and pin him, keeping him from returning to the play. Always beat your man back into the play.

2) 4 on 5 Stick And Move. When playing a man down, hit your man and move on, quickly getting back into the play. Do not get tied up with your man, giving the opposition more ice and your team less defensive coverage.

3) Numbers Hard At. When forechecking and the puck carrier's back is to you, numbers showing, chase him hard, quickly taking away time and space.

4) Crest Control Angle. When forechecking and the puck carrier is facing you, crest showing, control him by angling towards the boards. Make him go where you want him to go. Take away time and space in a controlled manner.

Defensive Habits Away From The Puck Carrier - Role 4

These hockey habits apply when playing away from the puck carrier:

1) Head on Swivel. Keep you head on a swivel, always turning your head, looking around, and seeing and reading the play.

2) Stick In Passing Lane. Keep your stick in the passing lane, taking away the passing lane and ready to intercept passes.

3) One Hand On Stick. Keep one hand on your stick (in passing lane) presenting a bigger profile and keeping one hand free for making contact with your check.

4) Back check Through Middle to the House. Backcheck through the middle of the ice all the way to the front of the net, (the house), pick up trailers, help out in front. This allows defensemen to pursue, maintain defensive pressure, and perhaps make a quick transition.

5) Never Caught Flatfooted. Never get caught flatfooted. Stay on your toes with a wide stance and a good knee bend, stick on the ice so that you are able to react quickly in any direction.

Offensive Habits With The Puck - Role 1

These hockey habits apply when playing with the puck:

1) Take What's Given Deep. Take what is given, but you must get the puck deep, at least behind the defensemen. Getting the puck behind the defensemen forces the defensemen to retreat further, prevents getting caught in transition and sets up

offensive pressure deep in the opposition's zone.

2) Take What's Given Out. Take what is given, but you must get the puck out of the defensive zone. Getting the puck out of the zone puts an end to the other team's offensive pressure. At worst, there may be an icing or the opposition regroups; At best, offensive opportunities may develop from the neutral zone for your team.

3) Keep Dumps Away From Goalie. Keep dump ins away from the goalie so that the goalie cannot control the puck. Dump ins away from the net may draw the goalie far out of the net and he could get caught if there is a breakdown.

4) Keep On Boards If No Play. Keep the puck along the boards if there is no certain play. This applies in all zones. Dangerous offensive opportunities can be given to the oppositions up the middle.

Offensive Habits Playing Without The Puck - Role 2

These hockey habits apply when playing without the puck:

1) Give Good Targets. Keep your stick on the ice and give good passing targets in an open passing lane. Move to open passing lanes. Make it easy to get you the puck.

2) Support Puck Carrier. Support the puck carrier by moving to open passing lanes, following in the open space created by the puck carrier's movement or going at and isolating defenders so that the puck carrier has more space to move to. Passing lanes, open ice, and defender positions are constantly changing, therefore supporting players must be constantly looking, reading, and moving.

3) Never Offside. Never go offside, especially on an odd man rush. Read the play, stay under control, and stay onside even if it means stopping.

Defensemen Retrieving Dump-ins

These hockey habits apply when defensemen are retrieving dump-ins:

1) Back Hard. Go back for the puck hard, top speed, stride do not glide. By going back hard you create precious time and space for yourself that you will need when you get to the puck.

2) Take A Look. Check over you shoulder and read the play behind you as you go back for the puck. You must know where your passing options are, where the forechecking pressure is coming from, and where the open ice is so you can **make your decisions before you get to the puck.**

3) Use Deception. Do not telegraph your decision. Use deception to control the opposition, keep the passing lanes open and create space and time to make your play. A simple body lean or head fake is often enough.

4) Move Puck Quickly. Move the puck up quickly, before the fore-check sets up. The first opportunity is often the best opportunity to get the puck out of the defensive zone.

Bench Management

These hockey habits apply on the bench:

1) Encourage your teammates. Give positive support and cheer.

2) Listen to your coach. The bench is the best classroom. Watch what is going on the ice and listen to your coach so you can learn.

3) Sit With Line mates. Sit with your line mates so that you can talk together and go back out together, so that the coaches can better track the lines.

4) Ask Who Is Up. If you are uncertain who is up next, ask.

5) Always know who you are replacing. Call out on the bench who you have. That way, if that player starts to come to the bench for a change, everyone knows who is going out.