

Newport Harbor Parents Guide to Field Hockey Rules

Congratulations! Your daughter is playing hockey for Newport Harbor! This is a great game with a long history, but many of you may be unfamiliar with the basic rules of Field Hockey (I know I was!), so here's a little primer.

Field Hockey is kind of a cross between soccer, and ice hockey. The players attempt to pass the ball down the field and shoot it past the goalie for a goal. Like soccer, there are 2 halves, with very few stoppages of the clock. Like soccer, there are 11 players, with roughly the same orientation of defense/back, midfielders, and forwards. Unlike soccer, there are no off-sides on forward passes or attacks.

The ball, as you probably know by now, is only to be hit by the flat side of the stick. Creative and skilled players may turn the stick upside down or slide it along the ground in order to hit the ball without hitting the back/curved side of the stick.

Whistles(!) – Fouls happen frequently in beginning play. On most fouls, the referee will award a free hit to the opposing team. On the free hit, the opposing team must be 5 yards away from the spot of the foul. Players may not lift a free hit, it must be a push pass, or drive (a strong hit). Fouls are often called because a player:

Hits the ball with their feet (though if they gain no advantage/incidental, this may not be called), probably the most common foul!

They obstructed an opponent's path to the ball with their stick/body/leg. Unlike soccer, a player can't defend by screening access to the ball.

Hit the ball with the back of the stick. Surprisingly this doesn't happen as much as you might guess! The girls learn quickly how to control the ball by rolling the stick face over the ball.

Hit the opponents stick in a deliberate attempt to take away the ball. Unlike ice hockey, the defense can't try to take the player off the ball, they need to focus on the ball!

Undercutting – Chopping at the ball in an unsafe way to get it in the air. This is often called as the offense is close to scoring. The idea is to lift, drive or push it past the goalie; not chip it up in the air in an unsafe manner.

Sticks – (High Sticks) Raising the stick in an unsafe way around another player (can be on the backswing or follow through)

Most free hits (whistles!) are simply a change of possession, but many fouls lead to scoring opportunities. Such as:

Penalty Corner/Short Corners – If the defense commits a foul in the shooting circle, a short corner is awarded. This is somewhat similar to a corner kick in soccer, except that the defense must start on the goal line.

Penalty Strokes – Awarded to the team on offense if a defender commits a foul in preventing an almost certain goal/referee discretion. This is like a penalty kick in soccer; just the shooter and the goalie. These are fun!

All scoring shots must be taken from within the shooting circle. Sometimes a goalie will let a long shot roll right past her into the goal, and you're thinking "WHAT ARE YOU DOING YOU #*&(%?!?!)" (Rookie mistake, those don't count).

The game is played on grass or field turf on a field the size of a soccer field. Obviously the uneven surface of grass makes the game a little different than the game plays on turf with advantages and disadvantages for both teams.

We are lucky to be a part of a great organization that has been helped by the efforts of our kids and of parents like you. Get involved and Finish Strong!