

Key Points for Offensive Play in the Offensive Zone

- Take the puck toward the net and use the triangle formation on the attack.
- The Puck carrier should attack with speed forcing the defense to make a decision and commit. This creates space for the attack.
- The 2nd man goes to the net—he is an offensive threat and opens the ice for the 3rd man on the attack.
- The 3rd man looks for an open passing lane high. He is also in position to be the 1st man out of the zone on any change of possession.
- Forward players should drive to the net with and without the puck—stop at the net for rebounds or late passes. Rebounds are the key to goal scoring.
- Forwards should go to the net with their sticks on the ice for tip-ins and rebounds.
- Never pass the puck blindly back to the points or into the slot—when in doubt keep the puck deep in the offensive zone
- Never turn the puck over anywhere between the blue line and the hash marks.
- The point men should shoot quickly, low to inside post in case the shot misses the net. This prevents the puck from “ringing” around the boards which could trap the forwards.
- Create lots of movement into open passing lanes with quick passes.

Offensive Attack

An offensive zone attack is really a two stage process; the first stage involves moving the puck into, or recovering the puck from, the offensive zone. The second stage consists of maintaining the puck in the offensive zone.

Scoring goals should be based on an overall offensive zone strategy. Our strategy incorporates six factors:

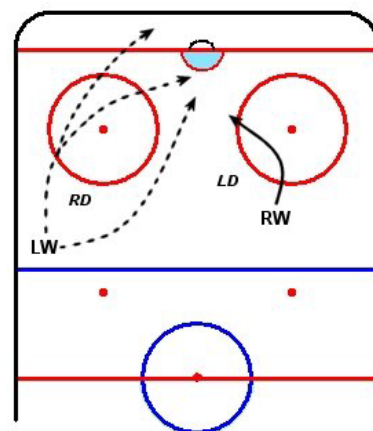
- ***Puck control and movement.*** Opportunities are created by the puck carrier moving and constantly looking to pass, shoot, or skate to the net.
- ***Positioning of non-puck carrying players with respect to the puck carrier/shooter.*** Supporting players should 1) position themselves to receive passes, 2) clear an area to allow space for the puck carrier, 3) screen an opponent, and 4) offer close support to the puck carrier.
- ***Defined plays with improvisation.*** By working on defined offensive plays, the players develop the confidence and ability to improvise on the defined plays when different situations arise.

- ***Shots on net from a high percentage scoring location.*** Move the puck from the perimeter scoring areas toward the slot or shooting zone so that a direct shot, screen shot, or deflection can be executed. After the initial shot, there is always the potential for a second opportunity; a rebound. Remember that each shot is really a potential one-two punch; the initial shot and the rebound.
- ***Patience.*** Patience by the offensive team, especially the puck carrier, is required to make effective use of puck control. Since your team has control of the puck, why be quick to get rid of it?
- ***Reading, reacting, and anticipating.*** All offensive players should know the tendencies of their teammates as well as learn the opponent's defensive strategies and incorporate this information into the overall offensive zone strategy.

Moving the Puck into the Offensive Zone

The puck can be moved into the offensive zone in three ways: 1) skating, 2) passing, or 3) shooting.

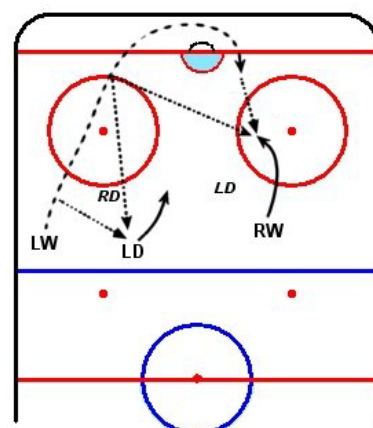
In this figure, the left and right wing attackers move toward the net. Employing a *skating attack*, the puck carrier (LW) can choose to put on a burst of speed and move to the outside of the defender (RD) or execute a body or puck fake and move to the inside of the defender and straight to the net. LW's teammate (RW) will need to read the puck carriers movements and react by positioning himself for a pass or rebound. LW should also consider the space behind the net when initiating this attack.



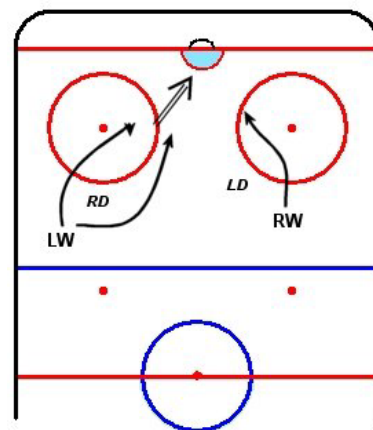
In the second figure, the three attackers (LW, LD, and RW) move toward the net. Employing the *passing attack*, the puck carrier (LW) can choose to:

- 1) pass to the trailing defenseman (LD) before moving past the defender (RD);
- 2) pass to LD just after moving past RD;
- 3) pass to RW just after moving past RD; or
- 4) skate with the puck behind the net and pass to RW (or LD) near the slot.

This last option is good because it forces the goaltender to move from post-to-post and look behind the net. A quick pass to the slot just might catch the goaltender off-guard or out-of-position.



The *shooting attack* can be used if 1) your teammate is covered, 2) the goaltender is leaving a portion of the net open, or 3) the goaltender easily gives up rebounds. As the LW moves to the outside of the defender (RD), he can shoot the puck at an open area on net or shoot the puck along the playing surface right at the goaltenders stick. This type of shot, executed from an angle, will generally result in a rebound into, or near, the slot. The RW should always be ready to grab the rebound and put it home!

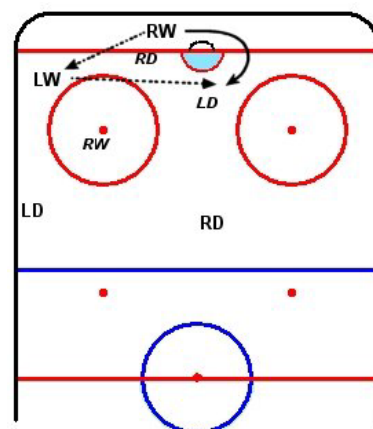


Maintaining the Puck in the Offensive Zone

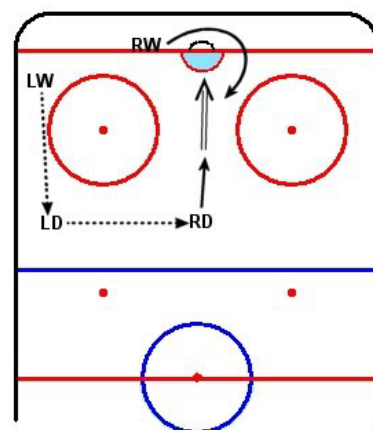
If moving the puck into the offensive zone does not produce a good scoring opportunity, the team needs to implement the second stage: maintaining possession of the puck in the offensive zone and creating good scoring opportunities. The strategy for maintaining the puck in the offensive zone involves the same six factors required to move the puck into the offensive zone: 1) puck control and movement, 2) positioning of non-puck carrying players with respect to the puck carrier/shooter, 3) defined plays with improvisation, 4) shots on net from a high percentage scoring location, 5) patience, and 6) reading, reacting, and anticipating player and puck movements.

Three techniques that can be used to score goals while maintaining possession of the puck in the offensive zone include: 1) puck control down deep with an eventual pass across the slot, 2) shot from the point, and 3) a slot shot by the center or a descending defenseman.

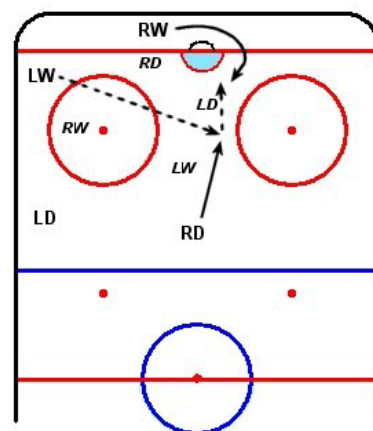
During an offensive attack, *a pass across the slot* can be a very effective way to score. This type of play works due to the quick lateral movement of the play (and the puck). The first figure shows the execution of this type of play in which the right forward (RW) has control of the puck down low. RW passes the puck to LW and then *moves away from the play*. With the puck along the left side of the rink (and most of the attention focused there), RW skates behind the net to avoid his coverage and positions himself on the far side of the net. LW maintains control the puck until RW is open and then executes a pass across the slot for a quick shot on net *and a goal!*



The second figure shows the execution of a shot from the point. As with the previous example, rapid puck movement is essential. The puck is moved from deep in the offensive zone by the left forward (LW) to the strong-side defenseman (LD) and quickly over to RD. This rapid puck movement does not allow the defenders time to get set up to properly cover the offensive team. Once RD has the puck, he executes a low shot from the point as the right forward moves out from behind the net to the front of the net. If the initial shot does not go in, RW is in the right location for a rebound.



The third figure shows what can happen when the defending players collapse on the puck carrier. While LW has the puck in the lower corner, the defenders are seen collapsing on him in an attempt to regain control of the puck. RD reads the play and reacts by moving toward the slot in anticipation of a pass from LW. As LW sees RD moving in, he passes the puck to him for a quick shot on net. Both RD and RW are in excellent position for a rebound.



Maintaining control of the puck, using the six offensive zone strategy factors described above, will provide an edge for a consistent offensive zone attack and should produce more goals!

Scoring Strategies from Behind the Net

There are very few constants throughout the course of a hockey game except that the surface area of the ice does not change. The ice surface is the same size during warm-ups as it is when the final buzzer sounds. While ice surface dimensions vary from rink to rink, the ice surface does not expand during a game?

However, in 1979, when Wayne Gretzky introduced the hockey world to a method which produced the effect of increasing the rink size. Increasing the rink size help Gretzky captain the Edmonton Oilers to four Stanley Cup victories, tallying nearly 1,700 points in 9 seasons, *many of which originated behind the net.*

Gretzky's vision and creativity should be studied by all hockey players and fans. He is so good that he discovered a portion of the ice that was rarely used and turned it into a scoring factory. He "created ice" and literally increased the workable skating surface by more than 10%. He formed a cushion of open ice around him, allowing time to set up literally hundreds of goals. Just when defenders think they have him where they want him, Gretzky continues behind the goal-line and begins negotiating another great play.

Traditionally, players have not ventured behind the goal-line. It is almost impossible to score with the puck behind the net, but as Gretzky has taught the world, it is a deadly place to initiate great scoring opportunities.

Why setting up plays Behind the Net is effective:

- Creates confusion and "blind spots"—your opponent must scan the ice and manage play that is now 360 degrees around them, instead of directly in front of them. As they turn their head, the play changes, briefly blinding their focus.
- Creates time—by creating ice (finding open ice) you create time for a great play.
- Opens up ice—pulls defenders down low and opens up the slot or a high pass to your defensemen. Luring an opponent below the goal-line will open up prime scoring space in front of the net.
- Great vision—you force the other team to play with their heads on a "swivel" while you keep the play (all the other eleven players) in front of you.

Plays from Behind the Net:

Whether you are in front of the net, or behind the net, the same three options apply; 1) pass, 2) skate or, 3) shoot. Shooting is generally the best choice while you are in front of the net, however, your best choice from behind the net is to set up a shot by passing to a teammate.

PASS—this is the best of your three options. Use the net as protection. Nobody will skate through the net, so use it to your advantage. This takes stickhandling skill and "Gretzky-like" vision. Plays cannot be set up from behind the net if you have "hands of stone" and if your

head is down. Vision and timing are critical. Try to be convincing through fakes to manipulate the opposition, opening up passing lanes to awaiting teammates. Make sure that your pass is perfect. A poor pass will result in a costly giveaway and a failed scoring chance.

SKATE—if a pass isn't there, if someone tries to flush you out, or if you are trying to move someone in front of the net, make a convincing fake or two and sneak out the other side of the net. Along the way, look for a pass to open up as you will undoubtedly meet resistance. If your teammates are moving to open ice and you are creative, you should have an easy pass out from behind the net every time.

SHOOT—it is rare that you will be able to “walk” out from behind the net into a great scoring position. Try a “wrap-around shot” or throw the puck low and on net as you sneak around in front. Always “follow” your shot hard to the net.