PCLA Fall Youth Lacrosse
Instructional Clinics and Sixes Play



From an acorn, a mighty oak grows

The purpose of our PCLA Fall Clinics is to teach our young lacrosse players the fundamentals of stick skills and team concepts. We play the Sixes format which teaches players offense and defense. The Sixes format is about moving the ball. THERE ARE NO BODY CHECKS! It is fast paced and fun! EVERY SESSION WILL HAVE BOTH INSTRUCTION AND SIXES PLAY.

We have two types of clinics:

"Give Lacrosse a Try" – is for new players and beginners (1-3 years of team play). It is played with sticks and balls and there is no checking. Its focus is on fundamental stick skills of scooping, cradling, passing, catching and shooting.

"PCLA Fall-Ball" – is for new, beginner and experienced players (3+ years of team play). It is played with full equipment, and stick checking is allowed. The key team concepts taught are on-ball offense and defense. This includes dodging and defending. Since there is only one ball in the game, the rest of the players are **"HELPERS"** on offense and defense. We provide additional instruction for new players on the fundamental skills.

Coach playing with both hands. It is always easiest to throw a pass to a teammate when your front shoulder is pointed towards your target. If you are running up the right side of the field keep your stick in your right hand. If you are running up the left side of the field keep your stick in your left hand. This keeps your shoulder pointed to the center of the field. If you are in the center of the field carry in either hand. If you carry in your offhand you can set up your strong hand. This is especially helpful for younger players.

ALWAYS keep your stick away from your defender. Defenders keep your stick in the same hand as the offensive player. This keeps your stick in front of the offensive player. This means you must change your hands based on what your defender does. If you do not have a defender close to you, change hands in front seeing the field. If you have defensive pressure turn away from pressure keeping your body between your player and your stick.

Coach the ability to change direction. On offense your objective is to create space between you and your defender. On defense you want to be in position to direct your offensive player. Both require that you change direction quickly. This usually means a change of hand also to keep your stick from your defender. Add skills to your off hand by using it more in practice and games.

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Lacrosse is a simple game, shoot the ball in the opponent's goal. Once you master playing with both hands and changing direction, the beauty of the game opens. The following schematic is complete game of lacrosse. There are nine skills and three phases of the game. Teaching lacrosse to young players and newer coaches begins with understanding the fundamental stick skills and team concepts. As players master these skills, we build on them with more advanced skills and team concepts.

Many of the skills are similar for both boys and girls. Although the sticks for boys and girls are shaped differently and have different depth pockets, scooping a ground ball is the same motion. Both boys and girls need to protect their stick from defenders. Sixes is also a more consistent format. All players have short sticks. All players are on offense and defense. NO BODY CHECKING is allowed. Fast and fun!

Our approach has traditionally been to have co-ed play with equipment for boys and girls K-2. Co-ed play with full equipment can also be used for grades 3-4 if there are not enough players to form girls only teams. By fifth grade we will combine enough girls to form girls only Middle School teams. Middle School or sooner, if possible, is when differences in rules come into play in the spring with our traditional boys' and girls' rules.



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Fundamental Skills (scooping, cradling, passing and catching, shooting)

Stick with tape on butt end and over the screw holding the head on the shaft. Tape may be placed on the shaft to guide beginners on proper hand placement. A piece of tape in the middle of the stick that is shoulder width apart helps new players with passing.

HOLD THE STICK WITH BOTH HANDS! Start with the "writing" hand on top. The other hand stays on the butt end of the stick. Top hand shoulder width apart when throwing. Top hand moves to the throat for scooping, and towards the bottom for shooting.

Scooping

1v0 ***Two butts down***-the players and butt hand on the stick. The ball should be even with your front foot. Scoop through and be prepared to move the ball off the ground.

1v1 ***Box out***-put elbow up and body between the opposing player and the ball and scoop. 2v1 within 5 yards of the ball, one player boxes out (I got man), the other scoops (I got ball). Many v Many move the ball to space where it can be scooped.

Loose ball team play. Players in the middle of field go for the ball. The onside player goes for the ball. The offside player moves to the middle of the field towards the goal ten to fifteen yards from the loose ball. He is an outlet or stops a break if the other team gets the ball.

Cradling

ALWAYS KEEP YOUR STICK AWAY FROM YOUR DEFENDER! ALWAYS! Make a muscle-this brings the head of the stick near the player's head. *Wave the flag*-use a circular motion with the top hand while the bottom hand is stationary. Use the force of the ball to keep it in the stick.

Changing hands moves the top hand holding the stick so it meets the bottom hand. The top hand is then placed on the butt of the stick. The ball in the pocket should always face the player.

Changing hands and direction in team play. Changing hands while carrying the ball occurs when you change direction. Your top hand on the stick matches the direction that you are moving. If there is no defensive pressure ***exchange hands in front*** of your body. Use your outside foot as your plant foot to change direction. If there is defensive pressure ***turn away from pressure*** by exchanging hands while your body is between your opponent and your stick. Use your inside foot as your plant foot and roll back away from the opposing player.

Changing hands and direction is best taught by the **Zig-Zag drill. Five cones set up in your backyard can make a big difference.**

Passing

Point your shoulder towards the target. ***Make a muscle***-this brings the head of the stick near the player's head. Throw with the top hand moving forward and the bottom hand moving backwards and *point to the target.* The stick should be away from the body *avoiding alligator arms*. When passing to a teammate ***keep your stick away from your defender***. ***Move towards the target*** when you are passing. To get separation from a defender a ***V to be free*** cut by taking a step towards the defender and then away from the defender to give you room to throw.

Catching

Call ***"one more"*** if you are open and want to receive a pass. *Make a muscle*-this brings the head of the stick near the player's head. This gives the passer a target to aim at. Move the pocket of the stick in front of the ball. Use *soft hands* to stop the momentum of the ball in the pocket. There is no need to snatch the ball or try to catch it like a basket. To get separation from a defender a ***V to be free*** cut by taking a step towards the defender and then away from the defender to give you room to throw. ***Move towards the passer*** when you are catching.

Passing and catching are best learned by ***Working the Wall. A ball and a wall provide more repetitions than having a catch.***

Shooting

General recommendations are to see the net, not the goalie. Change the plane of the shot. We teach high to low shooting. Low to high shooting is a low percentage shot for young players. Initiate shooting by moving the goalie. ***Bread n' Butter*** shooting asks initial shots to be lower right corner *(bread)*, or lower left corner *(butter)*. An initial high to high shot that can be tracked all the way gives the goalie confidence. A shooter does not want a confident goalie. *Bread n' Butter* shooting also prevents goalies from saving shots with their chest protectors. This makes the goalie look good.

Boys-***Time and room*** shooting is more than ten yards from the goal. ***Make a muscle***-this brings the head of the stick near the player's head. The stick is held further away and up from the body. Shoulder pointed to the goal. A *crow-step* starts with the back foot behind the front foot. The front foot will step towards the goal. This allows momentum to be transferred through the legs and torso, as the stick whips across with a full follow thought. The stick points to the ground at the finish. A strong transfer of energy and follow up puts *mustard on the shot*. We teach overhand shooting.

Girls-shooting principles are the same, except that the follow through on the shot may be considered a ***dangerous follow-through*** if an opposing player is close by. Excessive force or lack of control of the stick may also lead to a ***dangerous follow-through***. An opposing player cannot be between the shooter and the goalie. This is considered a ***shooting space violation***. The rules state that the defender must be outside a stick's length from the offensive player to avoid impeding her shot.

Cutting is moving towards the goal and catching and shooting on the run. ***Make a muscle***-this brings the head of the stick near the player's head. Cut towards the furthest goal pipe with your stick ***mirroring*** *the passer*. Catch the ball and redirect it towards any corner of the goal. Quick release of the shot is more important than shooting hard. A ***quick stick*** is redirecting the ball towards the goal without a cradle.

Individual offensive and defensive skills (dodging and defending)

Dodging 1 v 1

Move towards the goal and create space between you and the defender. The player with the ball has an advantage over his defender. They know where they are going, and the defender does not. Trick the defender into moving in the direction that you want them to go.

- The simplest way to trick your defender is to change speeds. If you run with the ball at less than full speed, when you switch to full speed the defender may not be able to react in time. Slowing down causes the defender to slow down. They do not know when you will accelerate.
- The next easiest way is to use a rocker dodge. While running towards the goal, plant your foot and turn back. Look in that direction to make your defender believe that is where you want to go. Plant the inside foot opposite your top hand. Use the outside foot to push off and move in

your original direction. This becomes more effective when you can change hands so the defender is not sure where you will go.

- Z Dodge attempts to get the defender to chase you by planting your inside foot opposite your top hand. Then move backwards to lure the defender into chasing you. Once the defender's momentum is moving forward, complete the Z and move in your original direction.
- Stick n' Step – If you feel defensive pressure, throw your stick to the sideline and step to your stick and look to pass or feed.
- Hitch Dodge – May fake a shot and push off with the front foot forward towards the middle of the field and past the defender. If the defender is taking away the middle of the field, you can do a split dodge from the hitch. This dodge starts with the same motion but use your front foot to step towards the sideline away from the defender. Roll your shoulder to protect the stick as you move past the defender. A split dodge is used to change direction quickly when the defender changes where his hips are pointed. Video by Joey Sankey: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nw2MaLixQsk
- The inside roll once again uses your inside foot opposite your top hand. It is an effective dodge from behind the goal when done close to the goal line extended (GLE). Plant your inside foot and change direction by turning away from your defender, and then your hands while protecting your stick from checks. The dodge starts by going up the field and ends with the player in front of the goal after the dodge.

Defending 1 v 1

Stay between your man and goal. This is called playing "goal-side". There are exceptions that are not usually taught at the youth level. Be close enough to your offensive player to be able to cover him if he were to receive a pass from where the ball is. **NEVER** turn your head on your offensive player. See the man twice and ball once, with your ***head on a swivel***. The defender should dictate where he will allow the offensive player to move on the field. Defense is played with your feet first, your mouth next, and your stick last.

- When you are playing an offensive player, your objective is not to take the ball away. Prevent their movement towards the goal and make it hard for them to pass or shoot.
- Approach from the goal towards the player. Do not chase an offensive player with the ball. Instead get to a place nearer the goal where you can approach from the goal.
- **Approach** with your stick in front of you at chest level. One foot goes in front of the other in a normal running motion. A stick length away from the player, **break down** with your feet shoulder width apart and move from side to side. Poke-check the bottom hand to interfere with the offensive player's ability to pass the ball. A forearm or hands together can be used to **control** the man via body contact. This is an **A-B-C approach.**
- Penalties are more likely to occur if the defensive player does not break down. This leads to the offensive player getting run over. This is a body check and not allowed. Penalties are more likely to occur when a stick check starts in a poor position. A defender's stick that starts vertical position will come down and likely hit the offensive player in the head. This is a slash and not

allowed. A defender's stick that starts to check from their side like an axe chopping wood, will likely hit the offensive player on their arm or body. This is slash and not allowed.

- One handed stick checks, over the head checks, the "rusty gate", the "ice pick" are not checks allowed in the PCLA. 7-8 grade boys have more latitude, but rarely will one of these checks work where a poke check would not. Save these checks for high school and college.
- When the ball is up top near mid-field, the goalie should call a dominant foot when a defender approaches the ball. If the offensive player is approaching the left side of the goal, the goalie will call "Right Foot", and vice versa. This prevents the offensive player from going to the middle of the field.
- When the ball is behind the goal the defender plays with their stick **IN FRONT** of the offensive player. Turn them back at the Goal-Line-Extended (GLE) based on help from the goalie's call of "Turn-em" or "Pipe". A defender should not allow the offensive player to beat them "topside" going up the field. Turn your player back from where they came.

Team offensive and defensive skills (helping)

Experienced players will assess the game situation by going through the following sequence:

- **Am I "On ball" or "Off ball"?** Only one player has the ball on offense, and one player is defending them. This 1v1 offense and defense was covered in session 2 – Individual Skills. On ball offense is to become a threat to score. On ball defense is to stop the scoring threat.
- **Am I "Off ball" or Off ball?** This is easy, if you do not have the ball in your stick, you are "Off ball"'. "Off ball" offense supports the ball carrier. Off ball defense is the support the defender on the ball. This is typically done with moving without the ball and communicating with the "On ball" player.
- **Are the number of defenders equal to the number of offensive players? *"Numbers"*** occurs when there are more offensive or defensive players. If your team has the ball and numbers spread out and pass the ball until there are no more defenders left. If you are defending against numbers pick up the closest threat to the goal and force one more pass. Defenders that have numbers can play two men, or "double" the ball. If it is a loose ball it is called "man-ball".
- **Am I on the "Ball side" of the field or the "Off-ball side" of the field?** Maintain balance of players on the field. Not all the players should be in the same area. Generally, there is a player in the center of field and a player on each side of the field. If the ball is on your side of the field or in the center, then be ***"aggressive on the ball***." If the ball is on the other side of the field, then protect against a fast break and be an outlet for your teammates.

Team Offense Principles

KEEP YOUR STICK AWAY FROM YOUR DEFENDER! CHANGE HANDS IN FRONT WITHOUT PRESSURE, TURN AWAY FROM PRESSURE AND MIRROR THE PASSER! When teammates make a pass and catch the ball that is ***exchanging.*** When you are ***mirroring the passer,*** you are catching to ***keep your stick away from your defender*****.** This is like seeing your teammate in a mirror. If the passer is throwing with their right hand, the catcher uses their left hand, and vice versa. ***Work the ball*** means finding an open man

within 15-20 yards. 15 yards or less for 3-4 grade and under. Carry the ball if the distance is further than 20 yards. Long passes are less likely to be completed. Long poles in 10v10 boys play can pass up to 40 yards.

Offensive balance is having a pass in front of you and behind you. Be far enough away from the next offense player so that one defender cannot cover two offensive players. Player formation will be dependent on your coach and number of players. 7v7 has 4 players on offense. This may be a box, a diamond, or Y formation. The Sixes format has 5 field players and a goalie. Five on a Die, like dice in a board game, is one formation that can be used in Sixes.

On ball, Job one is to beat your man and score a goal. Job two is to beat your man, draw a defender and pass or feed the ball. Be a triple threat: able to dodge, pass or shoot. The simplest team offense is a ***"Give and Go"***. When a pass is made to a team-mate your defender may watch the ball and forget their responsibility to cover you. If you see the back of your defender's head, cut to the goal and call "Here's your help".

Off ball, positions are adjacent, crease, and through

- Adjacent - ***Follows*** if ball is moving away from you, or ***Clear Through*** with ball moving towards you.
- Crease - ***Pick Away, Follow the Slide, or Pop-out*** not for K-2 or 3-4.
- Through – make a ***Passing Lane*** to see the ball without seeing a defender for a ***Time and Room*** shot, or ***Cut*** to the goal

Transition Between Offense and Defense

This is the area in the middle of the field between the restraining lines. Offense-Make the easy pass – work the give and go or work for a better shot. One cherry picker near the pipe. Defense-Stop a fast break at the restraining line, cover the closest threat to the goal. Defense gaining possession of the ball automatically has ***numbers*** clearing the ball because they have a goalie. A full field ride has even numbers but leaves the goal exposed. Not recommended for 3-4th grade divisions. With the ball, stay spread and pass the ball to the open man. Without the ball, force one more pass and recover to the crease to make things even.

Team Defense Principles (Man to man. No zone defense)

Play team defense with your feet first, mouth next, and stick last. Approach inside out. **BE IN POSITION BEFORE YOU CHECK! NO TRAIL CHECKS! GOALIE COMMUNICATES BALL POSITION, DEFENDER'S DOMINANT FOOT, SLIDES. DEFENDERS ON THE FIELD CHECK UP AND CALL THE NEXT SLIDE.**

Keep your stick in front or up in a passing lane. Goalie play must be coordinated with the defensive play. Goalie cuts off shots from wing area by being on the near pipe. **NO SHORT SIDE GOALS!** Defenders allow

shots from distance or away from the middle of the field. **DO NOT GET BEATEN TO THE MIDDLE OF THE FIELD!**

On ball, approach ABC and defend 1v1 and determine where the offensive player can move on the field. This is **AWAY** from the middle of the field!

Off ball, stay ***GOAL-SIDE***. Off ball head on swivel, never turn head on your offensive player, and sluff to pipeline. Be a pass length away from your offensive player. 7-8th grade teams may play ball-side on rides and on the crease. ***Slides*** come from closest defender and the next closest defender. Player that was beat will recover to the crease and find a man. If offensive man sets a pick, the off-ball defender calls ***PICK ON YOUR RIGHT or LEFT.*** He also calls ***GO THROUGH*** or ***SWITCH*** to maintain man to man coverage.

PLL Play Sixes Rules

Five field players and one goalie on each team. Shorten field with midfield line. 2 Sixteen-minute running clock halves. 5-minute halftime.

- NO LONG POLES
- NO BODY CHECKS
- NO OFFSIDES FOR FIELD PLAYERS, GOALIES CANNOT CROSS MIDFIELD
- NO CLOSEST TO A MISSED SHOT. GOALIE RESTARTS ON OUT OF BOUNDS AND GOAL.
- NO DEFENSIVE PLAYERS IN FRONT OF THE GOAL BLOCKING SHOTS
- FACE-OFF ONLY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GAME AND END OF PERIOD

Clear definition of body checking. USA Lacrosse prohibits body checking at **ALL** youth levels except 7-8th grade boys. It is not possible to prevent bodies from coming into contact at any level. However, this contact can range from “dehontsigwaehs”, which is Onondagan for “they bump hips” to running over a player from behind and leaving cleat mark on their backs. **ANY BODY CONTACT THAT DISPLACES ON OPPOSING PLAYER IS NOT ALLOWED! SIMPLY PUT, NO COLLISIONS! EQUAL PRESSSURE ONLY!** Stick checks must always be under control and directed at an opponent’s stick. Start checking below the offensive player’s shoulder. Downwards checks only.

Goalie and Face-off instruction is not part of our PCLA Fall Youth Lacrosse program.