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LACROSSE: EQUIPMENT AND GAMEPLAY TERMINOLOGY

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By [Nic Moss](#)

Lacrosse, often referred to as "the fastest game on two feet," has deep roots in North American history. Originating as a Native American game, it was played for ceremonial purposes, to settle disputes, and to prepare warriors for battle. French settlers in the 17th century observed indigenous people playing the game and named it "lacrosse" due to the stick's resemblance to a bishop's crosier (staff). By the mid-19th century, standardized rules had been established in Canada, paving the way for lacrosse to become an organized competitive sport. Over time, it evolved into the modern sport we know today, combining speed, skill, and strategy. Played on a rectangular field with a small rubber ball and long-handled sticks, lacrosse has grown in popularity worldwide, with both men's and women's versions of the game being played. To fully appreciate lacrosse, it's important to understand the terminology associated with its equipment and gameplay.



Arm Guards: Padded sleeves that protect the forearms from checks and stick contact

Attack Area: The offensive zone where the attacking team tries to score. It's located near the opponent's goal.

Body Check: A defensive maneuver in men's lacrosse where a player uses their body to legally hit an opponent to dislodge the ball

Clear: A defensive strategy where the team in possession moves the ball from their defensive zone to the offensive zone

Crease: A circular area surrounding the goal. Offensive players are not allowed to enter the crease, and the goalie has special privileges within it.

Cross-Check: A penalty for using the shaft of the stick to push or hit an opponent

Crosse (Stick): The primary tool used in lacrosse, consisting of a shaft and a head. Players use it to carry, pass, and shoot the ball.

Defensive Area: The zone where the defending team works to prevent the opposing team from scoring

Dodge: An offensive move where a player uses quick footwork and stick skills to evade a defender and create scoring opportunities

Equipment: The gear used in lacrosse, including sticks, helmets, gloves, and protective padding

Face-Off: A method used to start play at the beginning of each quarter or after a goal. Two players crouch down at the center of the field, and the ball is placed between their sticks. They compete to gain possession.

Fast Break: A quick transition from defense to offense, often resulting in a scoring opportunity before the opposing team can set up their defense

Goalie Gear: Additional protective equipment worn by the goalkeeper, including a chest protector, a throat guard, and specialized gloves

Ground Ball: A loose ball on the playing surface. Players often shout "Ball down!" to alert teammates when the ball is on the ground.

Helmet: A protective piece of equipment worn by players to shield the head from impact. Helmets are mandatory in men's lacrosse and often include a face mask and chin strap.

Holding: A penalty called when a player impedes an opponent's movement by grabbing their body or stick

Man-Up/Man-Down: Situations where one team has a numerical advantage due to a penalty. The team with more players is "man-up," while the penalized team is "man-down."

Midfield Line: The line that divides the field into two equal halves. It's also used to determine offside violations.

Mouth Guard: A protective device worn over the teeth to prevent dental injuries. It's mandatory for all players.

Offside: A penalty called when a team has too many players on one side of the midfield line

Pocket: The woven or strung [part](#) of the crosse's head that holds the ball. The depth and tightness of the pocket are regulated to ensure fair play.

Restraining Box: A rectangular area on each half of the field. Teams must keep a certain number of players within this box to avoid offside penalties.

Ride: An offensive strategy where the attacking team pressures the defense to prevent a successful clear

Shaft: The long handle of the crosse, typically made of metal, composite materials, or wood. It connects to the head and is used to control the stick.

Shot on Goal: Any attempt to score by shooting the ball toward the net. Shots that hit the goalpost or crossbar do not count as shots on goal unless they then enter the net.

Shoulder Pads: Protective gear worn on the upper body to absorb hits and prevent injuries during physical play

Slashing: A penalty called when a player swings their stick at an opponent in a dangerous or uncontrolled manner

Unsportsmanlike Conduct: A penalty for behavior deemed disrespectful or inappropriate, such as arguing with officials or taunting opponents

Wing Area: The areas on either side of the midfield line where players line up during a face-off

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A CPSI-certified playground inspector, Nic has been with AAA State of Play for over three years. Nic has a keen interest in playground design, construction, and installation, and he uses this passion to drive his work to new heights. In his free time, Nic enjoys hanging out with friends and living life to its fullest.

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