

8 STEPS TO REACH THE NEXT LEVEL IN FIELD HOCKEY



LAUREN PENNY

INTRO

I am often asked “**what makes a great hockey player?**” so I decided to put together this short guide on some of the things you need to be thinking about if you are looking to improve as a hockey player and reach the next level.

If you follow my advice I guarantee it will help take your performance to another level just like it has helped hundreds of hockey players that I have worked with from all over the world.

You too can also start to get you noticed by coaches and selectors and take one step closer to achieving your hockey goals.

There is however ONE defining factor between those that will truly benefit from this and those that won't. That is:

Only a small percentage of people will **TAKE ACTION** - so don't let that be you!

There is no point going through this if you don't have an open mind and are not prepared to make some shifts to the way that you think and train.

Who is this ebook for?

Hockey players that:

- Want to improve their game
- Aspire to be the best that they can be
- Want to be recognized for what they are capable of
- Have a desire to be selected for a higher level team
- Would like to be more consistent and keep enjoying playing the sport they love

If anyone of those applies to you then continue reading. If you do not want to improve and are not prepared to put in the hard work, then stop reading right now!

Now that I have cleared that up, let's get straight to it...

WHO IS LAUREN PENNY?

You may be wondering who I am, why I wrote this and why you should listen to me.

I'm a former International hockey player (South Africa) and throughout my journey I've had a number of setbacks and learnt many valuable lessons that have been vital in reaching the highest level. There is so much we don't get taught by coaches and many things I wish I had known sooner.

Over the last few years I've transitioned into a Performance Coach so I could help others and share these important lessons, going beyond just physical skills.

Now with over 10 years experience of helping others, I've realized the importance of eliminating the biggest barrier that gets in the way; ourselves.

Although talent is important, it is only one part of the puzzle and natural talent alone doesn't guarantee success.



You have so much potential (which you may not even be aware of) and you can be a great player if you really want it, but **you need to get your powerful mind working for you, not against you.**

My aim is to inspire others to achieve peak performance by helping them to develop the fundamental factors of success, which apply in both sport and also life.

*I do this by providing the tools and training which help you to think, eat and train like a champion. As a result **you can expect more confidence, better physical conditioning and increased levels of consistency** required to reach the next level.*

You now have a huge opportunity, but it all starts with step number one.

STEP 1: UPGRADE YOUR MIND

There is often not a major difference between international players and those that could have made it - we are all human, we all have one brain, one set of lungs and a couple of eyes.

Often the biggest difference comes down to: **what is happens in the mind.**

Most people don't realize that we all have what it takes to get to 4th place, just short of success but most tend to give up just before they are about to reach their goals.

When things start to get tough, that is the time to really dig deep and find that extra bit of effort as most people will start to fall away and it is those that hang on that will make it to the next level.

There are many factors to being a great sports person but when it comes to reaching a higher level **mindset is often the determining factor of whether players go on to reach their potential or not.**

"Mindset was the biggest difference between me not getting selected for the u18 national team aged 17 and making the senior national team a few years later even though I had never made a junior national team, lived 6000km away from my home country and the selectors not even knowing who I was."

*You could be the most skillful player in the world but if you don't know how to **be confident, stay calm under pressure and manage your thoughts and emotions** then you may not perform when it counts.*

Maybe you've seen glimpses of greatness within yourself when you do something awesome without really thinking about it and you even surprise yourself but I bet this only happens occasionally, almost by fluke.

But I want you to understand that this wasn't a fluke, that was your unconscious mind operating in it's ideal state which is often referred to as **playing in the zone.**

Often we end up trying so hard not make any mistakes in a game, particularly an important game that we end up overthinking which is when the conscious part of the brain takes over.

The conscious part of the brain wants to analyze and control everything but the problem with the conscious is that it reacts much slower than the unconscious part which reacts off instinct, which is more important in a fast paced sport like hockey.

The **fear of making mistakes** is also huge for a lot people as well as knowing how to deal with **frustration**, setbacks, injury and how to stay focused.



When I was younger I would always hear super star sports people say on the tv: My advice to young people is to “**believe in yourself**”

I never really fully understood what they meant by this until I started studying the brain and myself learn't **how to believe in myself**.

It is the thing we need most to be successful but hardly anyone knows how to do it.

Maybe coaches or parents have previously told you that you need to believe in yourself, but you still are not able to, because you don't know how. And that is a large part of what I teach.

Confidence is another major part of having the right mindset.

Have you ever heard the saying that someone is a confidence player; they play well when they have confidence and they play badly when they lack confidence?

We are actually all like that but if you can learn how to **tune into confidence FM using the power of your mind** it will help you to deal with the inevitable negative thoughts that we all get from time to time.

This is a very important point because even if you think you are mentally tough and confident right now, just know that you can always improve.

If things are going well for you and **you don't feel any pressure or fear at all then you are likely stuck in a comfort zone.** Maybe you're doing what you've always done and you feel comfortable with the level that you're currently at.

This means you may be **"settling for less"** than what you're capable of.

How do you know that you can't push yourself more and go on to achieve greater things? It's much easier to settle for average than it is to push yourself to a point that you feel uncomfortable.

Being in your comfort zone means you are **limiting your growth.** For example if you're the best player in your team then you may not be improving at the rate you could be compared to playing in a team with players better than you.

"Mindset is a skill that can be developed"

Just like any other skills, mindset can be improved with the right tools and training.



Maybe you don't know how to get yourself out of the negative thinking patterns which affects your confidence and leads to things like worrying what others think or comparing yourself to others, which keeps repeating over and over.

The problem is **no-one is talking or teaching about mindset because there is so much emphasis on physical skills** and drills, but understand that if you have low mental toughness then your physical skills will not show up when it really matters.

I've seen many players with great potential not reach their goals, not because they didn't have the skill, talent or ability but simply because they didn't work on their mental game and weren't able to perform consistently or when it mattered most.

As humans, our brain comes with a default factory setting so in order to be a champion, **you have to first learn how to think like a champion.**

That's why step number 1 is to upgrade your mindset.

STEP 2: SET GOALS & ASSESS

If you don't know where you are going then how can you firstly, keep yourself motivated and secondly, monitor your progress?

Having clear cut goals is not something we all do, in fact most people hate setting goals in the **fear of not achieving them**.

But if you don't set goals you are not committing to anything and you are not giving yourself something to focus on and work towards. For example:

Would you rather know that you did everything you could but fail or regret not giving more after it's too late?

You want to make sure that the goals you set are **slightly beyond what you think you're capable of**, not impossible but that you will have to work hard to get there.

If you don't do this then you will NEVER grow into the player that you are probably hoping to be, because I can tell you right now - you can be better than you think!

Who cares if you don't achieve your goals, you won't achieve them if you don't set any goals anyway. So, have the guts to set yourself goals and just go for it, you have nothing to lose.



Once you have set yourself goals, then you need to ask yourself **what you need to do to achieve these goals**. That's where you break it down into smaller, more achievable goals and set a plan. Remember a goal without a plan is just a wish.

This could be things like you need to develop my hitting, get stronger, improve reaction to turnover, make better decisions on the field, be more confident, learn how to deal with pressure, etc. These are just a few examples.

There are 4 core pillars that you will be measured by as a hockey player:



Most players and coaches only focus on one or two of these pillars.

If that is you then that means that you are only playing at 25-50% of your potential and **you're missing out on the remaining 50-75% opportunity to develop as a player.**

So remember to bear these 4 pillars in mind when setting your goals.

Next, once you have set yourself some goals and broken them down, the next important thing you need is a way of measuring your progress. I call this:

Assess to progress

For example in the fitness part of my training program I use various assessments to measure various aspects of hockey fitness such as: endurance, mobility, strength, power, speed, agility, core stability, recovery, etc.

This is not only important for tracking your improvements but it will also help you to stay motivated and to keep pushing yourself to improve.

Another example of an assessment that I use is a mental toughness quiz consisting of 25 questions, which I use to track players progress on the mental game. These are just a couple of examples but **everything you do should be measured** and assessed so you can figure out what will be the best use of your time.

STEP 3: GET FIT FOR HOCKEY

Have you ever played in a game when it feels like your lungs are about to explode or your legs start to feel like jelly and you **start to make silly mistakes** and bad decisions because you are tired, breathless and feel horribly unfit?

Perhaps there are times when **you don't run back when your team lose the ball** because you are simply out of puff or maybe you feel relieved when you are substituted because you get to have a rest and catch your breathe?

This is pretty common and the fact is that most hockey players are not fit enough to play at their best for 60 minutes, even though they do their own fitness outside of hockey.

The problem is that so **many players are doing the wrong kind of fitness training** which is not suitable for hockey players and many are wasting their time doing things that are not getting them the results that they want and deserve.



You don't want to be one of those players who lets the team down in the dying minutes because you make a mistake from fatigue, do you?

So, let me give you some context. A common question I get asked quite a lot is:

"HOW CAN I GET FIT FOR HOCKEY?"

I then answer this with the question: What are you currently doing?

I then tend to get one of these three responses:

#1: I am not doing any extra fitness myself or

#2: I sometimes go for a jog or a 5km run or

#3: I am doing everything I think I should be doing, training 6-7 days a week

Now there are a few things wrong here that I want to point out.

Answer #1: indicates to me that you either **don't have a specific goal with clear objectives**, or maybe you have a goal but you **don't have a plan**, or you have a plan but you **don't believe it** will get you the results that you want.

People here will often use excuses such as a lack of time or not knowing what to do. The first step for people here would be to work on your mindset and to become clear about what you want to achieve and why.

Answer #2: indicates that you want to improve but you **don't really know how to train effectively** because you are not using your time productively for the best results. But, think about it this way...

When do you ever run 5km in a straight line at the same pace in hockey?



Going for a jog or a 5km run is NOT going to get you fitter for hockey because running at a comfortable pace for 20-30 minutes predominantly **uses a different energy system** compared to when you play hockey which requires explosive movements and change of direction.

Running longer distances also makes you slower and increases your risk of injury because of the volume of impact going through your joints every time you take one step. Plus it can also be pretty **boring and time consuming**.

Answer #3: indicates that you're very serious and dedicated to improving but **you may be doing too much** and possibly even overtraining.

You're probably working too hard and not working smart enough.

I know first hand because this used to be me, I used to do everything I could to get an advantage but what resulted was a lot of time on the sideline injured. And if you're injured you can't play which is the #1 thing you want to avoid because it is super frustrating.

While everyone says you have to work hard which is partly true, you have to be careful not to overdo it.

Now you might be thinking, Ok this all makes perfect sense Lauren, but then what should I do instead? Well I'm glad you asked.

I am sure you would prefer to:

- **Train for less time**
- Have **more fun** and
- Ultimately **achieve your goal** of being fitter on the hockey field

So, the first and easiest switch from longer distance running is to:

CRANK UP THE INTENSITY!

You do this by using intervals. For example you could start off with 30 seconds of work followed by 60-90 seconds of rest, repeating for a total of 8-10 times.

That should take you between 15-20 minutes.



You can then progress from there, increasing the intensity further.

This does not even have to be running, you can choose a variety of exercise options from rowing, boxing, circuits, skipping, cycling, etc... as long as you go hard in the work period.

Now, this is just your starting point and there are several other phases you need to work through, so **doing intervals will only improve ONE piece of the hockey fitness puzzle.**

There's a whole lot more to hockey than endurance and often it is actually your muscles or your nervous system that gets fatigued first which then affects your heart rate, making you think it's your cardio fitness that sucks, but that's often not the case.

That's why you also need step 4.

STEP 4: BUILD A SOLID FOUNDATION

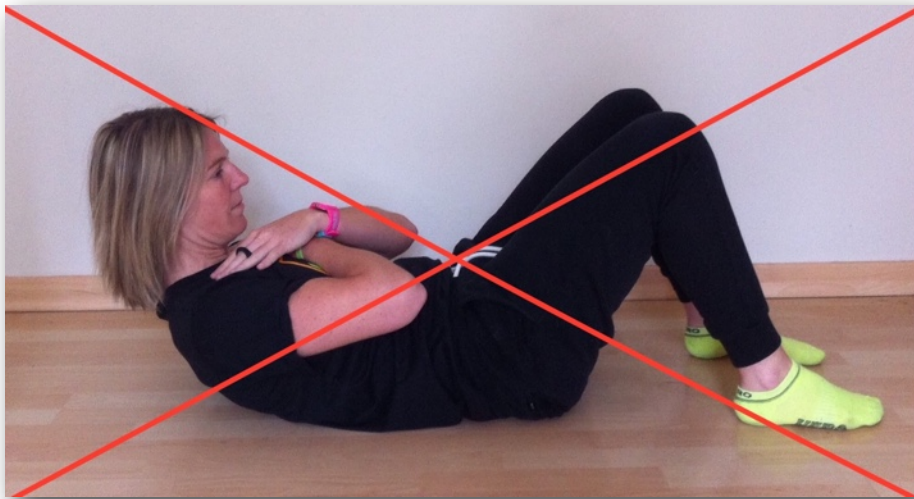
In hockey, one of the most fundamental aspects of being a physically dominant player is to have a strong core, which is often considered the base of athleticism.

Not only that but **a strong core can help to prevent injuries** and reduce excess strain on other muscle groups.

This first thing to understand about the core is that it is made up of more than just the abdominal muscles that you see which is often referred to as the sixpack.

The core consists of many muscles which connect your upper body to your lower body. However when I ask people what core training they do, the most common answer I get is: I do exercises like sit-ups.

But, sit-up's are not the best exercise for hockey players.



Exercises like sit-ups would be considered training your abs which are isolated muscles (not your core which is a group of muscles) and these kinds of exercises aren't really suitable for hockey players and **can cause more harm than good.**

In fact sit-ups can not only hurt your back (especially as most people do them incorrectly) but they also encourage the shortening of the hip flexors (the same things happens from the position that we play in), which can result in tight muscles.

Tight muscles = Lack of movement & loss of speed OR worse injury

The other thing to note is that exercises like situp's also **don't have a great carry over onto the hockey field.**

Think about it when do you ever lie on your back on the field? Unless of course you're pushed over, in which case means you need a stronger core too.

Now, there are many effective exercises that you can be doing which are more hockey specific and will have a better transfer onto the field for better results.

Doing a plank is certainly much better than sit-ups but it's still not as effective as most people think. The problem is that the **plank only works in one plane of movement** - i.e. in a static position.

If however you add in some movement and try to remain stable while resisting the movement, that would be a lot better as it mimics the stability required in hockey.

Think of slap shot for example. Your upper and lower body dissociate in the movement meaning your upper body is rotating while your lower body stays in the same position. This requires the core to be stable while integrating movement.

Another example of a better core exercise for hockey would be something like a woodchop, using either a medicine ball, resistance band or a light weight.



The wood chop exercise works on a rotational movement similar to hockey

Now I used to make a lot of these mistakes myself and I've been given bad advice from so called "fitness professionals" so that is why I am here to help you now.

It has taken me over 10 years to learn and understand the science behind designing effective training programs. I also have over 20 years experience playing hockey so I understand the physical demands of the game.

In my experience I've seen all sorts of things that are not only ineffective but also quite likely to cause more harm than good and that's why you shouldn't just follow any program, particularly if it has no relevance to hockey.

Strength is the foundation of your athletic ability, transform this into power and it can give you a huge advantage on the hockey field.

Power is your explosiveness or first step quickness and allows you to get to the ball first, make dangerous interceptions or produce powerful passes or shots at goal.

**You cannot have power without strength so you
MUST start with strength first**

Everyone's body is different and we all have different needs so before I design any program I always consider things such as the person's age, training experience, level, their goals, how much they're doing, how much time they have available, etc.

Some of the program design variables I factor in are: exercise variations, how many reps, sets, how much rest, what tempo, how much volume, intensity, etc.

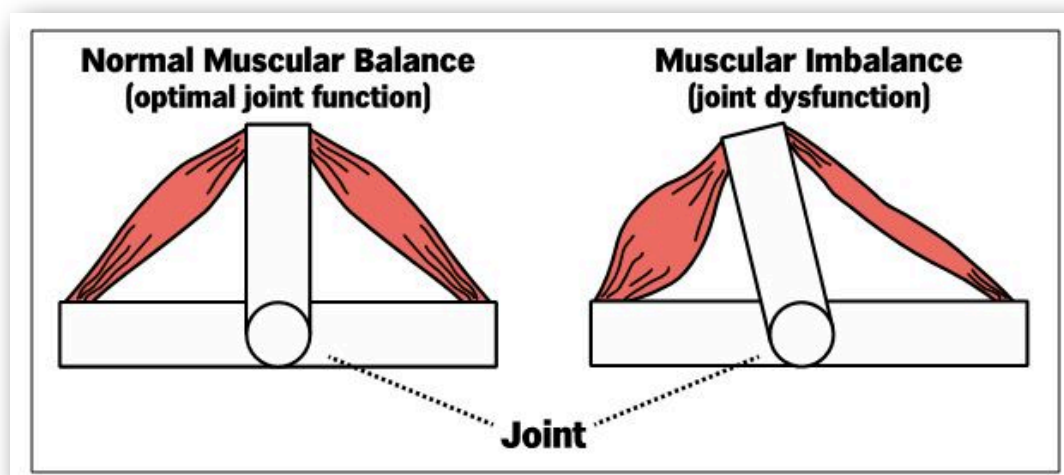
Your body takes about 4-8 weeks to adapt so **each training phase should last between 4-6 weeks** and the program will need to be tweaked in order to keep making progress. This should also be relevant to where you're in your season.



You cannot work on everything at the same time, just like **you cannot train at 100% intensity all year round**, which is why you need a structured 12 month program that has periodized, so you know exactly what to focus on and when.

This includes off-season training which must address and correct any muscular imbalances which are created from playing hockey.

If you are not qualified and do not understand the detailed science of program design then **don't just pick your favorite exercises because this is a recipe for muscle imbalances which are likely to lead to injury.**



I've made this mistake myself which has led to many injury problems.

Another mistake I see a lot of is using resistance machines that you find in most gyms. Again, there is little carry over onto the sport's field. These machines are predominantly training muscles, not movement which is most important in sport.

Next, you may have a great plan, but you also need to understand how to do the correct technique of each exercise, making sure you are using the correct muscles to execute the movement and understand how the exercise is helping you.

The benefit of doing strength and power training is massive not just in terms of **physical dominance on the field but also in injury prevention.**

As long as it's done correctly it can get you much closer to reaching your goals.

But, it is crucial that you have a good structured plan with different phases throughout the season/year (not just in-season or off-season)

Here's an example of some of the progressive phases I use in my programs:

5 PHASE PROGRESSION



For some reason there is a huge **myth** that training with weights isn't good for hockey players, especially younger players, but this couldn't be further from the truth.

As a hockey player, it is absolutely crucial that you condition your body to be able to take the demand that hockey places on you physically.

This is called strength training.

For teenagers building strength is more important than any other training you do, simply because your body is growing at such a rapid rate and your body may seem to be out of proportion which means you are at a high risk of injury.

The right kind of strength training will make the muscles surrounding your major joints stronger and more durable, meaning it will **reduce your risk of getting injured**, while also helping you to be **stronger on the ball**.



Strength training also improves the major energy system used in hockey and will result in **less fatigue after short bursts** of explosive moments such as leading, tackling, diving, hitting, slapping, drag flicking, etc.

Following a structured strength training program will reduce your risk of injury and avoid those little niggles we tend to pick up, especially at the beginning or towards the end of the season.

STEP 5: GET FASTER WITH MECHANICS

Once you have a good base of strength and developed your power, the next step is to transfer this into being faster on the hockey field.

Most coaches seem to agree that speed is king in sport because speed is a dangerous threat, especially in attack.

So, if you want to become an athletic hockey player that always gets to the ball first, bursts past players effortlessly and is a threat every single time you get the ball then pay attention to the key considerations here.



Now, you may have heard people say “***your speed depends on your genetics***”

But this is **not strictly true**. Yes genetics do have a part to play but contrary to popular belief speed can be taught and developed.

This means that if you are naturally fast, with the right training you could really maximize your genetic gift to be even faster. If you have never been fast then you definitely need to work on your speed so you don't get left behind and can keep up with the quicker players.

Something very important to note here is that strength and power is the core foundation of being faster which is why I spoke about that strategy first.

3 KEYS TO MAXIMIZE YOUR SPEED ON THE FIELD

1) Improve mobility

Mobility is the quality of your movement or being able to move your limbs and joints through a full range of movement. This is different from flexibility as unlike flexibility it is not isolated at each joint, mobility also involves the central nervous system.

Muscles with limited mobility will restrict you from being as fast as you can, but most people are often not even aware of their lack of mobility, because it's become normal to them.

2) You **MUST** sprint at 100%

Now when I talk about speed training, I'm not talking about doing loads of sprints that make you tired, that is conditioning! Anyone can make you tired and work you into the ground, but not many people know how to train to get faster on the field.

To get faster you must sprint at 100% so the key is the work and rest periods.

Another mistake a lot of people make is to '**sprint**' for **too long**. For example think about when you try to intercept a ball in a game or when you hit as hard as you can. An all out 100% effort can only last in the region of about **6-10 seconds MAX!**

**100% EFFORT LASTS
6-10 SECS MAX**

If you're running for 30 seconds that is not sprinting because you're probably only going at 80-90% intensity.

If you gave 80% effort in order to win the ball you probably won't get in front of your player would you?

3) Learn the right mechanics

Being fast in hockey is not just about running fast in a straight line but also being able to change direction efficiently. This is commonly known as agility.

You can make several improvements in your agility by changing a few things such as **where to place your foot when turning** or the **firing the right muscles to turn away quickly** or **how to position your body for quicker reactions**.

These are called mechanics.

Most players only train acceleration and fail to train deceleration, which is the ability to stop quickly and change direction.

Deceleration is where most injuries happen because most don't train it.

It's a bit like rollerblading without knowing how to brake or stop.

The goal of deceleration is to stop quickly to get somewhere else.

Many people aren't even aware of this and even the majority of coaches don't know or can't explain how to turn and change direction effectively because they don't teach that in coaching courses.



*"I am now so fast that my opponents
cannot catch me"*

Lauren Piper (HPA member)

This is just one example of loads of these kinds of messages I get.

In a nutshell, speed & agility training is not just about doing sprints, but rather:

- Using the right energy system
- Activating and firing the 'key' muscles
- Learning the mechanics of how to run faster (acceleration)
- How to slow down quickly (deceleration)

Ultimately this means going forward and changing direction in the most efficient way so that you get from A to B as quickly as possible.

STEP 6: GET NUTRITION & RECOVERY RIGHT

If you ever find that you get tired, feel bloated or fatigued before the end of a game, it could have something to do with your nutrition.

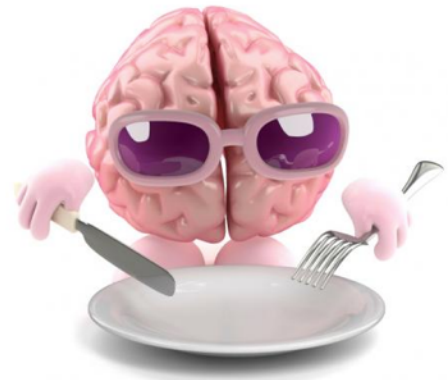
Most people don't realize how much nutrition can effect their performance on the field. This is not about dieting, in fact eating for hockey is very different to eating for weight loss or muscle mass.

Did you know that nutrition can affect your decision making?

That's because food is a basic need for humans so if you are not eating enough before games or having the wrong types of foods it will affect your energy output, leaving you feeling tired with less energy for your muscles.

Likewise, **if you eat too much then your brain will be focussing on the unconscious process of digesting your food** rather than reacting instinctively to what's happening in the game.

I'm asked many questions about nutrition and there is never a simple answer to the typical questions I get because it depends on many factors, for example here are:



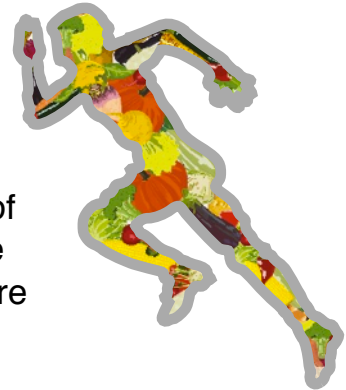
10 NUTRITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- *What to eat on days you train vs days you don't*
- *When should you eat*
- *What portions you need*
- *How much to have from each macronutrient (types of food)*
- *What to eat and drink before, during and after games*
- *How many calories you need according to your age, height & weight*
- *The level of activity you doing*
- *What your goal is*
- *What kind of foods you like/have available*
- *Your schedule (it has to be realistic)*

Honestly, I could spend weeks talking to you about nutrition because that is how complex it can be. The most important thing is that you understand **what you should be eating when based on timings.**

If you feel bloated before a game, then you've probably eaten too much or too close to the start of a game.

If you feel tired or fatigued particularly in the last 10-15 mins of the game, this could be due to either not eating enough of the right foods or even dehydration, so you also have to make sure you are also drinking enough fluid.



If you have 1 hour to eat before a game you shouldn't have a big meal with slow digesting foods. Instead opt for something that has a balance of getting into your body quickly but will give you enough energy to sustain throughout the game.



A good example would be a fresh fruit smoothie perhaps with a scoop of protein powder.

Ideally you should aim to eat **2-3 hours before your game** with the right balance of carbohydrates and protein which will make sure that you have enough energy to last throughout the whole game.

Recovery is another common area that is often overlooked.

You have to manage your physical energy. If you ignore recovery then it could lead to injury, overtraining or burnout which can take months to recovery from.

There's a very fine line between training hard and overtraining so it's important that you manage your schedule and allocate enough time for recovery.

There are various strategies I teach that can help you recover between games, but the first simple steps are to take care of the basics which are to get make sure you're eating enough, getting enough rest, sleep and to also take your mind off hockey at times too so you can recover mentally.



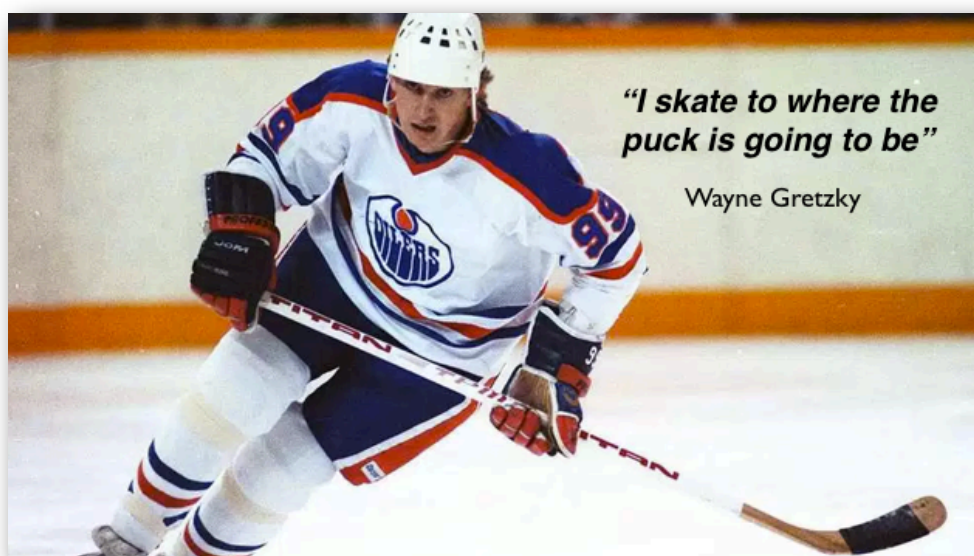
STEP 7: IMPROVE VISION & DECISION MAKING

The next point is one that people don't always think about in terms of performance but I will explain why it is a very important factor in hockey.

Often some of the best players in teams are the ones that are able to see passes and know when to pass and when to take it yourself.

This is often referred to as good decision making.

To demonstrate this I'm going to use one of my favorite quotes by Wayne Gretzky, one of the best ice hockey players of all time.



What this means is that you have to be able to anticipate what is going to happen next in a game.

In most games you are normally faced with at least two options, for example it could be to pass to a teammate or have a shot at goal.

What happens when you get caught between two decisions is that you can land up not making any solid decision and you go in half-heartedly which often leads to nothing, i.e. giving the ball away or getting tackled.

Decisions in games are often made in split seconds based on how much information is available to your brain at that time.

How can you make sure that your brain has enough information available to it to make the right decision?

One way is to **train your eyes**.

Your eyes are the window to your brain so the more you can see, not only in front of you, but also in the corner of your eye the more information your brain has to make an unconscious decision.

This allows you to see where the opposition or your team mates are and where the space is, without the need to look up.

Training your eyes will allow you to:

- Have more time on the ball
- Be a step ahead of the game
- Make better decisions
- Deliver more accurate passes
- React faster
- Be in the right place at the right time
- Make more interceptions
- See space more easily



There are various elements of visual performance in sport and the most common ones in hockey are **peripheral vision, spacial awareness, depth perception, eye tracking, dynamic visual acuity and hand eye co-ordination**.



There are many visual exercises that can be done to improve these various aspects. One example to improve your hand eye co-ordination is juggling or air dribbling where you try to keep the ball bouncing on your stick.

If you find that easy then you can make it harder by adding in some tricks or by replicating the kind of distractions that are going on in a game.

Another great way to develop your decision making is by watching video footage and analyzing games.

It's even better if you watch yourself and see if you can notice things you didn't see in the game, perhaps things you did well and also some things you could improve on. You want to be as decisive as possible so that you can read each situation in a matter of split seconds which will allow you react first before your opposition.

A large part of this is also **understanding tactics**.

Although coaches play a large role in the teams tactics, it's also up to players to understand the patterns of play because ultimately you're the one that needs to make decisions on the field, so **you need to develop the ability to think for yourself so you can react instinctively**.

Having worked with hundreds of players, I've realized how many people are not sure what to do and where they need to be, which is common among hockey players of all ages.

Although some coaches have good tactical knowledge, many don't explain or communicate what they know in a way that players understand.

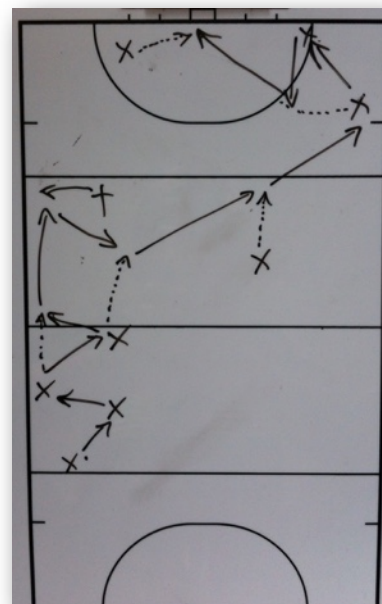
Too often as hockey players we don't ask questions because we don't want to seem silly or sound stupid, which links back to mindset.

That's why I took it upon myself when I started playing at a higher level to **ask more questions**, learn more about why the coach wants me to approach at a certain angle and when I need to step up to put my player under pressure, etc.

Advanced **tactical knowledge can turn the best hockey players into exceptional ones**.

Equally, having a talented player without the tactical understanding can make a potentially great player, an average one.

At the highest level, hockey can become like a game of chess, where the team with the best plan comes out on top, just like when GB women beat Netherlands to win Gold in the 2016 Rio Olympics.



"PLAY THE GAME"
Not just play in it

Therefore it's important that you learn how to **'play the game'** not just play in it.

STEP 8: MASTER YOUR SKILLS

I bet you were expecting this one to come up a bit sooner and to feature more, because it's what most players spend their time working on, but please understand that if you don't work on all the other points already discussed, then there's no point having good skills and you'll be missing out so much more potential to develop.

Now improving your skills will certainly help but it doesn't guarantee success. I've seen so many players not get selected despite having slick and silky skills.

One thing to understand is that anyone can improve their skills with enough practice, as long as you're working on the right technique.

That's how I made my national team even though I wasn't the most skillful player because the coach knew my skills would improve within the first few weeks of being in the national system, but it's not easy for coaches to get people to believe in themselves, because often that's not what they're trained to do.

If you're making mistakes the first thing you need to do is to recognize the difference between a **PHYSICAL error** VS a **MENTAL error**.

- **A physical error** is when you are not able to do a skill in training under no pressure, let's say you can do it 3 times out of 10. In this case you would just need to spend more time practicing it to be more consistent.
- **A mental error** is when you're able to do a skill well in training (let's say 8 times out of 10) but when it comes to a game, you only do it well 4 times out of 10.

That means **50% of the errors you made were mental errors**, not physical errors.



Let's say you wanted to do a new skill like a **tomahawk**.

First you need the knowledge of how to do it properly, there may be 3-5 key things you need to think about.

For example, it could be the position of your feet, ball position and maybe the angle of your backswing.

Once you know what to do, then it is just a case of practice, practice, practice.

Don't expect to do everything perfectly straight away or you will lose motivation and might want to give up, so have patience.

Whenever you learn something new there is always a learning time required.

If you practice a skill enough times with the correct technique in mind then you will improve but it will take more than just 10 minutes of practicing it.

The skills you choose to work on should also be relevant to your game.

You probably spend at least 80% of games using basic skills, such as passing and receiving, therefore you **should spend at least 80% of your time training your basics** and 20% of your time on the more advanced or specialist skills.



Don't waste time getting good at something that you'll never use.

For example so many players spend a lot of time practicing drag flicks, which you might use once or twice in a game (if you're the best at it) but you might not even get the opportunity to use it in a game.

Don't spend all your time working on something that won't guarantee your place in the team, especially because so many people train drag flicks these days.

Rather spend that time on something that will get you better results.



"Trapping and passing are the most important skills in hockey BY FAR! Having the ball on your stick, controlled, allows you to do anything else with it. If there's one thing to constantly practice, it's passing and trapping over and over."

Mark Knowles, FIH 2014 player of the year

Something else I just want to point out is that you shouldn't just work on your weaknesses, you must also **maximize your strengths** because that's what will get you noticed and what separates you from others.



If you've found what I've shared helpful and you're someone who can see the opportunity you have to become a better hockey player, simply by working smarter and using the right training methods, then I've got something exciting for you...

Imagine... what it will be like when you are so consistent that you cannot be overlooked by coaches and other players start to look up to and are inspired because of what you do on the pitch.

How would you like to:

- Be more confident on the field?
- Feel great after every game, like you made the difference?
- Become so physically dominant that no-one wants to play against you?

Isn't it time you finally gained the respect and recognition you deserve?

WANT MORE PERSONALIZED ADVICE?

There's so much more I would love to share with you, which is why I would like to offer you the **unique opportunity to have a chat with me** and get personalized advice on how to take your hockey to the next level.

I'm sure you have more questions after reading this, so this is the perfect chance to speak to me directly and ask any questions you have, but it is limited to availability so don't procrastinate or take time to think about it.

It doesn't matter how old you are or what level you're currently playing at, if you are serious about wanting to improve then I would love to chat with you and help you.

Get in touch now... (before you forget)!

[CLICK HERE](https://hockeyperformanceacademy.com/application) TO REQUEST A FREE STRATEGY SESSION

If the link doesn't work go to: <https://hockeyperformanceacademy.com/application>

FINAL WORDS

I really hope you've found this guide useful and it's opened your eyes to some of the area's that you may not have thought about before.

What I've learn't is that getting results is all about **taking action consistently**.

Accountability is the key here. That's because we are more likely to let ourselves down compared to when we are accountable to someone else.

Who are you accountable to?

If you're serious about taking your game to a higher level, I would like to offer you the unique opportunity to get some guidance from someone who has reached the highest level in hockey and has also coached hundreds of others to do the same.

You have nothing to lose, so don't let fear stop you from taking the next step.

If you need help putting all these things into action with a step by step program then you may also be interested in our [Mentorship Program](#) which has been designed to take you from where you are to where you want to get to.

It's about working SMARTER not just HARDER.

Let me help guide you along your path to success by learning what I did to become an international player and some of the mistakes that I learn't along my journey.



What you will learn will not only apply on the hockey field, but in life too.

Here's to your success,

Lauren Penny

*Former International Hockey Player
Performance Coach & Mentor
Hockey Performance Academy*

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID:

What I've shared in this ebook is based on the knowledge and experience I've gained over many years both playing hockey as well as a ton of studying and gaining qualifications in sports performance, which has **transformed into real results** with many different types of people at various ages and levels.

If you're still holding back then here's what others have said about working with me.



"Since joining my game has improved massively and my confidence has soared! This is the answer to anyone who wants to take their game to the next level"

Ellie Rayer, 18 years (now England & GB seniors player)



"I've learnt many tweaks to my skills that make a big difference. I've since improved my vision, confidence and mental toughness. I also knew I needed to do pre-season fitness but I never knew what to do or how to structure the workouts, but HPA has helped with this"

Cameron Ley, 15 years



"Macy's confidence and focus were off the charts. I've never seen her play like that! I'm so proud because she was handing it to college players! It was amazing to watch. You've helped her confidence in so many ways, thank you! Her confidence meter is full and she is unstoppable! She couldn't have done this without you and what you've taught her"

Jennifer Szukics, parent of player from US



"The HPA has helped me to play better, my thinking is more positive and I know exactly how to prepare for games and get into the zone. Without it I would not be playing to my potential."

Bruno Sousa, Brazilian Senior National Player



"This gave me so much confidence which has allowed me to play better and my game has improved massively. I would recommend HPA to anyone looking to improve their game"

Jordan Homann, 13 years (now England u16 player)



"To show how effective this has been I accomplished my target of becoming player of the season within my team. Without it, I'm positive that this wouldn't have been achievable and I'm overjoyed with what I've experienced"

Jamie McDonald, Club Player



"I wanted to put things right after many years of regret as a junior. Within 12 months of joining the HPA I went from a club player to playing in the over 40's Masters World Cup in Australia"

Rachel Collier, Welsh Masters International



"I was so nervous to join because my confidence was so bad and I didn't think anyone could help me. Since joining I've made it through various selections and achieved what I didn't even think possible. If Lauren hadn't helped me I absolutely 100% would NOT be playing to the standard that I am now."

Lauren Piper, 16 years