

What is the OFF-SIDE rule in hockey?



The off-side rule in hockey was created to keep players from “cherry-picking,” which means standing in front of the opposition’s goal and waiting for a pass and a chance to score. The off-side rule helps to keep the game moving from one end of the ice to another.

TERMINOLOGY

A team’s *offensive zone*—the area of the ice between a blue line and the end of the rink where a team attempts to score on the opponent’s goal.

A team’s *defensive zone*—the area of the ice between a blue line and the end of the rink where a team defends their own goal.

Neutral zone—the area of the ice in the middle between both blue lines.

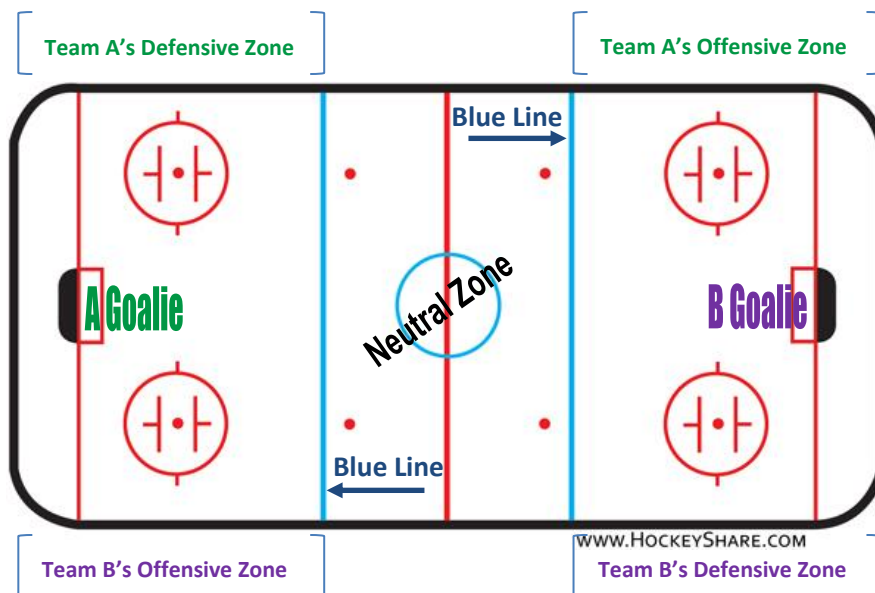
Off-side rule—an infraction that occurs when an attacking player precedes the puck into the offensive zone.

Attacking players—the players who are attempting to score a goal in the opponent’s defensive zone.

Defending players—the players who are trying to prevent the attacking players from scoring.

Blue line—either of the two blue lines that run the width of the ice and indicate where a player must be to stay onside.

In the diagram below, Team A is attacking from left to right and Team B is attacking from right to left.



THE BASICS

If an attacking player crosses the blue line into her team’s offensive zone before the puck, play is stopped as the player is offside.

MORE DETAILS

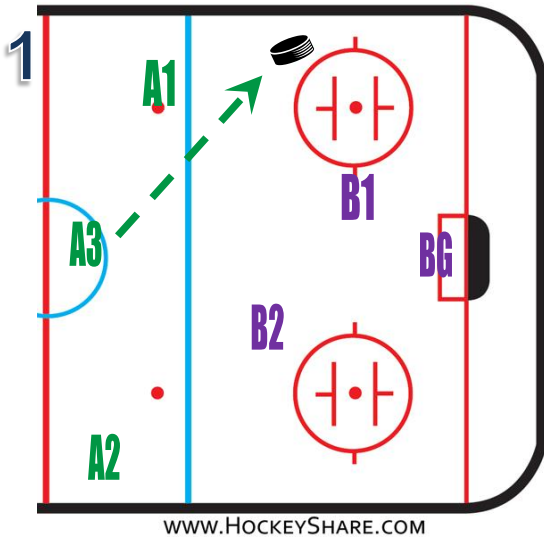
It is not an offense for a player to be in an off-side position—between the blue line and the opposition goal. It becomes an offense when the puck enters the offensive zone.

Once any player carries the puck over the blue line towards the opposition's goal, all of her teammates can cross the blue line and be ready to play the puck.

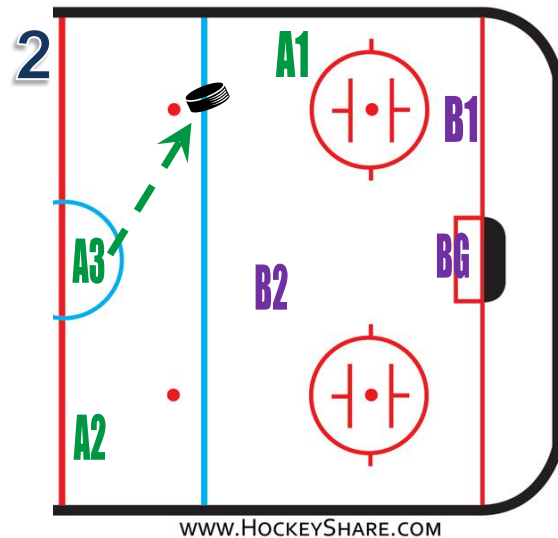
Once the puck leaves the offensive zone and completely crosses the blue line and back into the neutral zone, all attacking players must leave the offensive zone before any of them can carry the puck over the blue line or receive a pass in the offensive zone. When the puck goes back over the blue line into the neutral zone, all attacking players need to reset by leaving the offensive zone themselves. None can re-enter the offensive zone until all have exited.

If a player is called for being off-side, the referee will stop the game and a faceoff will take place at the red face off dot in the neutral zone nearest to where the off-side player played the puck.

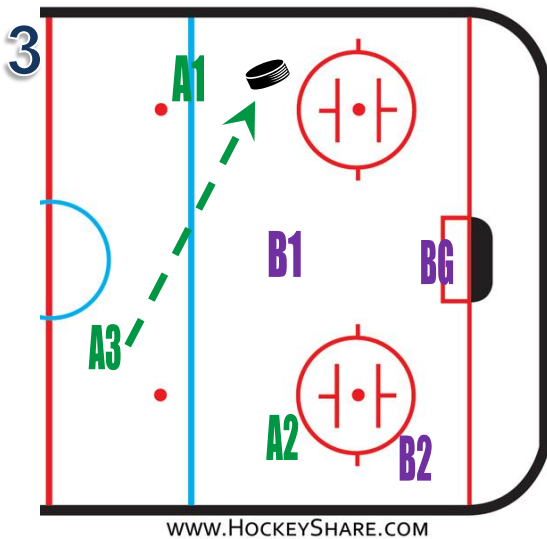
DIAGRAMS



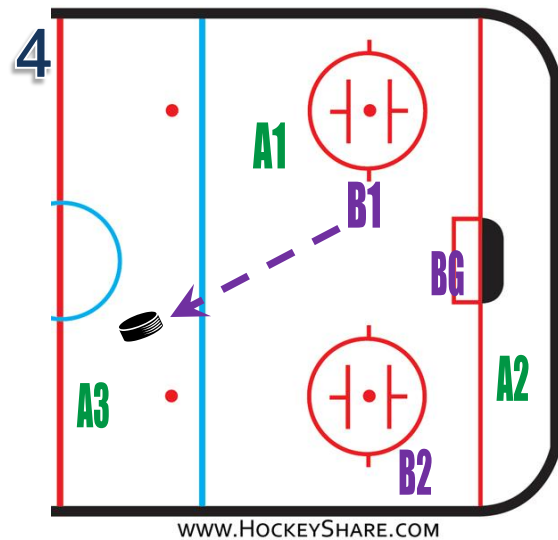
In diagram 1 above, player A1 is able to go to receive the puck on a pass from A3 as A1 was behind or on the blue line when the puck crossed the blue line.



In diagram 2 above, player A1 will be offside if she touches the puck on the pass from A3 as A1 has crossed the blue line before the puck.



In diagram 3, if player A1 plays the puck, she will be called offside because A2 is in an offside position, and no player on team A can touch the puck in the offensive zone if the player was already in that zone at the time the puck crossed the blue line.



In diagram 4, players A1 and A2 will all have to re-enter the neutral zone before any of them can touch the puck in the offensive zone again. A3 can still touch the puck in the neutral zone or even move it into the offensive zone, but A1 and A2 cannot touch the puck until they have both left the offensive zone.